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STRONG MEDICINE...A PRESCRIPTION FOR THE HEART  
OF HAMILTON-WENTWORTH







## STRONG MEDICINE...A PRESCRIPTION FOR THE HEART OF HAMILTON-WENTWORTH

August 23/96

## DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY; EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### FROM ANALYSIS TO ACTION...

The Downtown Partnership Strategy document, entitled "*Strong Medicine...A Prescription for the Heart of Hamilton-Wentworth*", attempts to combine the findings and directions of the "Founding Board" of the proposed Greater Hamilton Downtown Community Development Corporation with experiences and proposals drawn from complementary sources. The Founding Board was created by Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Council and Hamilton City Council to enlist downtown residents, business-people and other stakeholders in an effort to develop a multi-faceted strategy to revitalize Hamilton's Downtown. At the time it was established, it was anticipated that the Founding Board would sponsor the establishment of a community development corporation under legislation passed and funded by the previous Ontario Government.

The Downtown Partnership Strategy proposes to act on the ideas of the Founding Board, but it proposes a new approach to achieving the results targeted by the members of the Founding Board.

The Downtown Partnership Strategy suggests that the Founding Board should not proceed with the creation of a community development corporation, since the funding for such initiatives has been discontinued and the format has proved cumbersome for those involved. In its place, the Strategy proposes the establishment of a *Downtown Hamilton Partnership*, a small group of leaders of business, government and the community at large, who would set broad, strategic direction for Downtown initiatives, but whose work would be done through existing organizations and special task groups created to achieve specific results, in most cases involving the current members of the Founding Board. (sections 20.1 through 20.7, and Action Step #16)

### EXAMINING THE ISSUES...

The Downtown Partnership Strategy examines the major issues facing Downtown in a new, and occasionally provocative way, under such headings as:

*Are taxes too high and punitive?*  
*Is the Downtown safe?*  
*Is Downtown a place to go through, or to?*  
*Are heritage properties an asset or a burden?*  
*Is parking too expensive and over-policed?*  
*What do we do about vacant lots and vacant stores?*  
*Do we need more megaprojects?*  
*Can Downtown attract residents of all income groups?*  
*Does Downtown retailing have a future?*

(sections 2.0 through 12.0)



## A LIST OF PRACTICAL MEASURES...

In answering these questions, the Downtown Partnership Strategy suggests a multi-faceted approach, based on the work of the Founding Board and conclusions drawn from other sources, including the Architects' Society Charette and the experiences of other centres facing similar issues. Nineteen specific "Action Steps" and a number of additional measures are proposed, including some preliminary suggestions on the organizations, groups and individuals who might undertake these assignments.

Among the actions proposed by the Downtown Partnership Strategy are these:

1. Boost the distinctive retail and day-trip profile of Downtown by targeted recruiting one or more major US retailers without a significant presence in Ontario, and enlist municipal leaders in that effort. (*sections 12.1, 12.2; Action Step #1*)
2. Work with landlords to create redevelopment proposals for existing properties, aimed at providing facilities for design studios, computer software firms, artists studios and "loft" apartments. (*sections 13.1, 13.2; Action Step #2*)
3. Create a public-sector fibre-optic cable wide-area communications network focused on the Downtown in 1997, to demonstrate that Hamilton makes a good location for communications-based businesses, such as call centres and commercial "back office" functions. (*section 13.3; Action Step #3*)
4. Promote Downtown Hamilton as an excellent location for national and regional association headquarters, by specifically targeting the national trade association of those organizations. (*section 13.4; Action Step #4*)
5. Make parking lots part of the solution to the problems of Downtown, not one of its major symptoms. Combine licensing and redevelopment incentives for commercial parking lots to promote their early redevelopment and to discourage further demolitions leading to more vacant parking lots. (*sections 14.1, 14.2; Action Step #5*)
6. "Take the side" of the retailers and the hospitality industry in tax assessment matters. Use the resources of the municipalities to support the efforts of retail and hospitality businesses to reduce their property tax obligations, including assessment appeals. (*section 14.3; Action Step #6*)
7. Expand the range of tax-exemptions for public and cultural institutions, to promote their continued ability to operate economically Downtown. (*section 14.4; Action Step #7*)
8. Work with landlords to recruit short-term commercial tenants to vacant properties, especially those with street-exposure. (*section 14.5*)
9. Sponsor block-by-block business meetings of in-town and out-of-town landlords,



and with the Hamilton Parking Authority, with a view to stimulating redevelopment proposals on underutilized sites throughout the Downtown. (*section 14.5*)

10. Over the next twelve months, "option" four or five properties with a high redevelopment priority for the Downtown, and prepare investment prospectuses for presentation to identified potential investors. The investment prospectuses would highlight commercially attractive features, such as a commitment to include Regional Municipality office space, to relax parking requirements, and so on. (*sections 15.1, 15.2, 15.3, 16.1; Action Step #8*)

11. Improve the physical/pedestrian links between key areas of Downtown: between Hess Village and the Convention Centre; between James Street North and the Eaton Centre area; and, between Theatre Aquarius/Broadway and King Street East. (*sections 6.2, 16.3; Action Step #9*)

12. Develop plans to "open up" Summers Lane, the Eaton Centre and Jackson Square, each of which lacks much the positive street-level presence on which Downtown vitality depends. (*sections 6.3, 16.4, 16.5; Action Step #9*)

13. Move ahead with the commitment to locate the headquarters of the Philip group of companies in Downtown. (*section 16.6; Action Step #9*)

14. Explore a limited two-directional street system for King Street between Ferguson and Queen, and examine the potential for generating more customer traffic by making James Street North a northbound, rather than southbound, street. (*section 6.4, 17.1, 17.2; Action Step #10*)

15. Consider a distinctive, no-charge Downtown "beltway" shuttle bus, modelled on the experience of Denver. (*section 17.3; Action Step #10*)

16. Revive proposals for a light-rapid transit facility to connect the Downtown with the Harbour and the Mountain, and view it as a development vehicle, not solely a transit measure. (*section 17.4; Action Step #10*)

17. Negotiate a Downtown transit pass for McMaster and Mohawk students, as part of their annual "activity fee". (*section 17.6; Action Step #10*)

18. Consider closure of some portion of the south "leg" of King Street East, between James and Hughson, to create a pedestrian concourse. (*section 17.7; Action Step #10*)

19. Authorize universal "no charge" 3-hour parking in all or most municipal lots, to be effective for the 1996 Holiday season. (*sections 8.4, 8.5, 8.6, 17.8; Action Step #11*)

20. Define the Downtown as a separate "neighbourhood" for land-use planning purposes. (*sections 18.1, 20.8; Action Step #17*)



21. Heritage preservation should focus on creative re-use and facade preservation, rather than simply preventing demolition or acquisition of buildings by public authorities. *(sections 7.1, 7.3, 18.3)*
22. Main Street should be developed as Hamilton-Wentworth's institutional address, including extensive floral plantings and decorative street hardware, and the elimination of portable and oversized signage wherever possible. *(section 18.2)*
23. As a lever to redevelopment, Regional Municipality office space should be relocated to strategic downtown locations wherever feasible, on an aggressive timetable. If appropriate, the decision to relocate the Region's headquarters to the Court House should be reconsidered, especially if a major new corporate or institutional entity could be recruited to Downtown by leasing that property. *(sections 18.4, 18.8; Action Step #12)*
24. Consideration should be given to proposals developed at the Architects' Charette for the redevelopment of the interior of lots on streets parallel to major arteries, such as King William. *(section 18.5)*
25. Promote the consolidation of southern Ontario Federal and Provincial regional or field operations into the Ellen Fairclough Building as Regional Municipality tenants vacate. *(section 18.8)*
26. Develop strategic alliances for the marketing of Downtown entertainment and cultural assets, both within the community, and beyond to Southern Ontario and Western New York, with special emphasis on profitability and external tourist market potential. *(section 19.1)*
27. Encourage the Art Gallery to initiate a major reservation-ticket exhibition with commercial marketing potential. *(section 19.2; Action Step #13)*
28. Prepare a new NHL franchise proposal, based on the concept of creating a Second Division NHL group of teams. *(section 19.3; Action Step #14)*
29. Limit any public investment in "destination attractions" to modernizing existing assets and to limited-exposure joint ventures with adequately funded commercial sponsors. *(sections 11.5, 19.4)*
30. Explore with the Hamilton Halton Homebuilders, the possibility of expanding their recent initiative into the creation of a full-scale neo-traditional neighbourhood on underutilized lands adjacent to the Downtown. *(sections 19.5, 19.6, 19.7; Action Step #15)*
31. Hire a Downtown Co-ordinator with responsibility to follow-up on the actions outlined in the Downtown Partnership Strategy and the directions of the Downtown Partnership, once established. The Co-ordinator would be a full-time advocate for the Downtown, operating at arm's length from municipal authorities, but with the support of



municipal resources. The Co-ordinator would bring commercial real estate, architectural design and marketing skills to his or her task. (*sections 20.6, 20.10, 20.11; Action Steps #2, #18*)

32. Municipalities should use exemptions or waivers of fees/conditions strategically, as redevelopment negotiating tools or to promote targeted activity. Since undistinguished blanket exemptions apply equally to desirable developments, to "undesirable" developments and to developments that would have occurred in any event, they leave little further scope for municipalities governed by "no bonusing" limitations. While good for marketing purposes, further blanket exemptions should be carefully evaluated before they are undertaken. (*sections 20.12, 20.13*)

33. Create a separate Downtown current and capital budget within the overall budgets of the Regional Municipality and the City of Hamilton, in order to allow priorities to be established and work to be more effectively co-ordinated. For 1997, municipal budgets should invest significantly in a continuation of the successful floral program within the Downtown, and to target street-scape and boulevard improvements in strategic locations in and around the Downtown. (*section 20.14; Action Steps #19*)



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## STRONG MEDICINE...A PRESCRIPTION FOR THE HEART OF HAMILTON-WENTWORTH

### 1.0 Introduction:

1.1 At the last municipal election, the Mayor of Hamilton and the Regional Chairman of Hamilton-Wentworth sought a mandate to take decisive action to revitalize Downtown Hamilton's "Central Business District". Over the last several years, other voices, including leaders in business, labour and the media have joined in the call for action to deal with the evident decline in the economic importance and public perception of Downtown Hamilton. Efforts have also been made through the Mayor's Downtown Task Force and the City of Hamilton's CAPIC initiative.

1.2 In this municipal council term, a group of downtown "stakeholders" were asked by municipal authorities to consider the creation of a Greater Hamilton Downtown Community Development Corporation (GHDCDC), using new legislation modelled on the successful experiments with community development corporations in older urban centres across the US and in a number of smaller communities in various Canadian Provinces. The "Founding Board" of the GHDCDC has met regularly throughout this year, including a session aimed at creating a strategic focus and work program to guide the proposed development corporation. This year has also seen the adoption of the Strategic Plan by the merchants and business people in one of the downtown's Business Improvement Areas (BIA). Most recently, the Hamilton Society of Architects has carried out an exciting two-day downtown revitalization "charette" as part of its Sesquicentennial contributions.

1.3 There is no shortage of good will or effort. But the challenge remains. It is quite clear by now that the challenges of revitalizing Downtown Hamilton will not yield to our conventional approach to civic issues. We need a new, more sophisticated and multi-faceted approach.

### 2.0 Historical Background/Contemporary Trends:

2.1 Little time needs to be spent outlining the historic role of an urban downtown, as a focus of commerce and culture. But it is equally neither necessary to point out that the contemporary economy has fundamentally undermined that role, nor to observe that our experience is unhappily shared, in varying degrees, by most cities our size throughout North America. (The Hamilton Architects Society Charette's examination of an admittedly larger centre (Pittsburgh) illustrated this last point).

2.2 Some would argue that the "edge city" phenomenon has rendered the traditional downtown "obsolete" as a retail and non-institutional commercial centre. The patterns of commerce, transportation and land-ownership are certainly not well suited to compete with the automobile-focused world of the mall, the office campus and the



industrial park.

2.3 But the tables may be turning. Disposable income is increasingly being used on services rather than goods. Busy higher-income consumers and time-pressed commuters seem more willing to pay a premium for variety and convenience, rather than relying simply on the price-competitiveness and the uniform product-lines of "power centres" and "box stores". The largely unrestrained growth in conventional retail uses across Ontario has saturated the retail marketplace, shaving profit margins very thin, and in the process rendering many second-rank retail uses uneconomic (strip plazas and discount malls, for example).

2.4 These new developments in the retail field, if anticipated and analyzed properly, could level the playing field for downtown retailers, especially those who offer service-intensive products, convenience-oriented services, or alternatives to mainstream or franchise product lines. Nor should we assume that Downtown's commercial revitalization would be led by the retail sector. Even within major industrial firms, commercial activity is increasingly dependent on information-handling and data-processing, rather than materials-handling and high-volume, low value-added manufacturing.

2.5 Demographic trends are creating a post-child-rearing generation of relatively affluent baby-boomers, with the associated consequences for consumption, housing and entertainment. Although currently under a lot of economic stress, over time cultural and hospitality uses, both Downtown and elsewhere, are likely to benefit from these trends. Economic globalization, fiscal pressures and environmental concerns are producing demands for creative solutions to the need for delivering public services more efficiently, in a compact, diversified and healthy community, and to adapt to changes in technology and working conditions.

#### Purpose of this Downtown Partnership Strategy:

2.6 The purposes of this Downtown Strategy are three-fold.

2.6.1 Its first objective is to analyze the obstacles that stand in the way of meeting our collective objective of making the Downtown of Hamilton and of the Hamilton-Wentworth regional community a place where our community can "live, work, visit and play".

2.6.2 Its second objective is to find a new way to empower existing groups and individuals with a commitment to Downtown, rather than creating new organizational structures or to involve committed supporters of the Downtown in apparently open-ended obligations to committee work.

2.6.3 The third objective of this Strategy is to find a way to have major public



institutional entities with a stake in Downtown, specifically the City of Hamilton and the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth, join with private-sector interests, both those with Downtown presence and those with a stake in the Regional economy, in a Downtown Partnership. The approach of the Downtown Partnership would be not so much to "do" things for Downtown, as to sponsor a series of initiatives by others, in order to capitalize on the strengths and areas of interest of the participants.

#### Progress to Date:

2.7 Any analysis of the situation with Downtown Hamilton must begin with a recognition of the many initiatives that have been taken during the recession of the early 90s, and especially during the current term of municipal council. In his July 1996 Report to the City of Hamilton's Planning & Development Committee, City CAO Joe Pavelka summarized the many initiatives that have been taken to revitalize the Downtown by the City of Hamilton and others.

#### DIAGNOSING THE MALADY:

##### 3.0 Are taxes too high Downtown?

3.1 Most conventional evaluations say that the proportion of property and business taxes paid by Downtown Hamilton merchants and landlords are higher than would be the case in other commercial districts within the region, and in neighbouring regions, with the possible exception of Metropolitan Toronto. Taxes are an important component in the cost of doing business, especially for retailers, and they can be a factor in evaluating the viability of commercial development projects, which have to compete with vigorous suburban competition.

3.2 It should be said, of course, that in some commercial districts in major urban centres and in some malls, retailers are faced with a burden of non-tax "business-occupancy" costs that far exceed the additional tax burden being experienced by downtown retailers and office lessees. If the downtown economy was stronger, with more shoppers and more demand for commercial space, the heavy emphasis on taxation as "the answer" would be more balanced. Caution should also be exercised in assuming that generalized assessment reform (such as the "Actual Value Assessment" proposed to be implemented in 1998) will produce the competitive gains that downtown properties anticipate, since market-related assessment is a relative system, based not on business profitability but on land valuation.

3.3 It is therefore conceivable that revisions to downtown taxable assessments may not yield the significant reduction in net tax obligations that its proponents imagine. It is equally possible that the current Provincial proposals to replace business assessment surcharges on business tenants, and to allow the use of "variable" or adjusted mill rates for



adversely affected classes of property, may not produce the relatively large tax reductions that downtown businesses and property owners anticipate.

#### 4.0 Is the Downtown taxation regime punitive?

4.1 If a landlord decides to carry-out improvements to his or her commercial or mixed-use property, the Provincial assessors will promptly increase the value of the property's assessment in proportion to the new investment, even prior to the property being occupied. Conversely, if a commercial landlord loses a retail or commercial tenant, the Provincial assessors will reduce the tax obligation for the property by eliminating the business tax assessment payable by the tenant, and by converting the property's taxable status from "commercial" to "residential", thus reducing the landlord's tax obligation by a further 15%.

4.2 Without considering corporate Income Tax incentives for depreciation and capital losses, if the landlord decides to demolish a vacant commercial building, rather than to maintain it in a boarded-up condition, the Provincial assessor will remove the building portion of the property from the assessment roll, so that the landlord's tax obligation is limited to the vacant land. This combination of fiscal and economic inducements favouring vacancies and demolitions are added to the cost of meeting civic and building requirements for health, safety, security and heritage preservation of unoccupied buildings. Pure business economics can favour demolition.

4.3 The existing tax and assessment regime rewards keeping commercial properties vacant, rather than leasing them short-term to marginal businesses or for low rents. It also favours the creation of surface parking lots, and discourages maintaining older buildings and renovating them, or building new, unleased "speculative" space.

4.4 If a landlord succeeds in leasing office space to a governmental authority, the governmental authority is liable to pay applicable commercial taxation. If the same governmental authority uses a public building, even a building owned by another level of government (such as the Ellen Fairclough Building), it pays no property or business tax. Finally, if a governmental authority leases some portion of its own building to a private business or a Crown Corporation, the leasing business pays business taxation, but not property tax.

4.5 These tax rules discourage the Region, the City and other governmental bodies from renting otherwise suitable office space in commercial buildings, and it arguably gives private firms in government facilities (such as catering and smoke-shop uses) a competitive advantage over other commercial food shops.



## 5.0 Is the Downtown safe?

5.1 One of the most frequently repeated concerns about the Downtown is a perception of lack of security. Downtown residents and retailers cite the presence of "undesirable elements" who are making shoppers and Downtown employees uncomfortable, especially in public areas, after regular business hours, and on side streets. While some effort at policing may move around the pan-handlers, the street-people and the petty nuisances, the more likely solution is a generalized increase in pedestrian activity, a perception of public order, and a greater sense of "neighbourhood".

5.2 With increased pedestrian activity and a greater sense of "neighbourhood concern", many of those who are now perceived of as an annoyance or even a "threat" become a recognized feature of the urban fabric and even "local colour", allowing the police and the community to isolate and deal directly with any criminal elements or persistent public nuisances. But how do you promote a sense of neighbourhood? How do you promote the level of around-the-clock, throughout-the-week, "all seasons" pedestrian activity that permits the "undesirable" elements to be overwhelmed by the offsetting positive effect of the numerous and the familiar?

5.3 One of the lessons learned from the failed efforts in many US communities to make parking lots and public areas "feel safe", is that the simple expedients of enhanced lighting or more open-space do not produce a perception of safety or comfort. The glare of high-candle-power lights do not make New York's Central Park or Toronto's Regent Park much safer. Lighting can, however, be used creatively to create a mood and a perception of activity or watchfulness. The use of ornamental lighting at Christmas (Gore Park; Victoria Park in Simcoe), and the use of more creative institutional lighting (Sarasota; Nathan Phillips Square and the Theatre District in Toronto), can create a positive ambiance of safety and interest that generates the crowds who, by their presence, really DO produce a safer environment.

5.4 Ultimately, of course, the key to public safety is more people. More people widen the peak periods when there is "something happening" Downtown, and more people also create more "eyes on the street" in the off-peak times.

## 6.0 Is the Downtown a destination or a thoroughfare?

6.1 In the absence of convenient cross-town transportation arteries (such as Red Hill Expressway), the Region has developed a network of one-directional Downtown streets, which channel automobile and truck traffic to and through Downtown with an efficiency that is the envy of cities like Toronto and Ottawa. The motor-vehicle accident rates in Downtown are proportionately among the lowest among Ontario downtowns. The transit system operates with good connections and, for a Downtown location, HSR boasts remarkably efficient schedules and run times.



6.2            Anyone who has stood curbside on King Street East, or in front of the Sheraton, or opposite City Hall on Main Street, however, understands why sidewalk cafes, street-face top-quality retail, and pedestrian-friendly public uses find it difficult to take root and flourish. As things stand, King Street is for cars, not people. Those exiting the Convention Centre, Copps Coliseum, Hamilton Place, or the Sheraton, are unlikely to walk to Hess Village, or James Street North, or King Street East. The sidewalks are narrow, unsheltered from wind and the elements, with little inviting street-level activity and a high-volume of fast-moving, close-by automobile and truck traffic. For shoppers, evidence suggests that the alternative is to get into one's car and go to Limeridge, or the Meadowlands. For the entertainment "consumer", Westdale or Olde Towne Stoney Creek are apparently more inviting.

6.3            Perhaps the most significant potential for redesign and reintegration of street-level uses lies in the "tunnel" area between Bay and James, on both sides of King. With the exception of the Sheraton entrance, this stretch is a dark, wind-swept, noisy culvert of automotive, truck and bus traffic. In the daylight hours it is a scene of standing vehicles and turning-movements into parking garages, with pedestrians running the gauntlet between Jackson Square and the Convention Centre or the transit mall. In the evenings, when there are theatre patrons and convention visitors to attract and impress, it leaves them with a distinctly uninviting and negative impression of Downtown Hamilton, despite the more interesting and inviting scenes, beginning two long city blocks away to the east and the west. This should be an early candidate for the creativity of architects and urban designers. Since much of this stretch of uninviting streetscape owes its origin to municipal initiatives, municipal funds should be part of the price of undoing the well-intentioned damage done to the urban fabric of Downtown.

6.4            Is the efficiency of the Downtown's one-directional street system, and the related use of the system by the HSR and truck traffic, making it difficult to regenerate the Downtown? It is interesting to note that Kitchener has recently reversed its twenty-year experiment with one-directional streets on key downtown arteries, at a retrofit cost of \$1.5 million (although the City found that traffic signal phasing and street reconstruction requirements were such that much of the expenditure could be offset within the existing capital budget). During the Architects' Downtown Charette, Ken Greenberg and John Sewell noted that virtually no downtown one-way street outside Manhattan had any record of sustaining profitable, positive street-oriented retail activity.

## 7.0    How important is "heritage" to Downtown revitalization?

7.1            History can be an asset, or it can be a burden and an obstacle. So while much has been made of the heritage character of our Downtown and its precincts, heritage preservation has both positive and restraining implications for Downtown revitalization. Downtown revitalization should make use of heritage properties and heritage features where they contribute to the revitalization of the Downtown "neighbourhood". As the

*Gore Heritage Study* suggests, heritage buildings can be a valuable, attractive addition to a commercial district. But like any neighbourhood, the Downtown is "organic" and must be allowed to regenerate itself. Isolated heritage initiatives, often involving taxpayers investing where commercial interests cannot justify an expenditure, should be used sparingly. Likewise, an overly ambitious definition of "heritage" can leave us with a Downtown frozen in aspic, as the physical plant deteriorates awaiting some prospective "white knight" investment.

7.2 Another perennial issue in Downtown revitalization is the role of the Gore. Whatever its associations with past history and the adolescence of this community, the Gore and the recurrent redesign of Gore Park is an issue that should not be a major focus of the revitalization Downtown. The primary consideration should be to ensure that the Gore does not adopt a function that is inimical to the revitalization of the retail and hospitality businesses on which redevelopment depends. We must avoid attracting the "street people" who become a signature of the Gore Park, and by inference, east Downtown. It is much more important to ensure that the park is well maintained, pleasant and inviting to strollers and families, than it is to focus on its physical attributes or further costly restoration efforts.

7.3 If we eschew nostalgia, and focus on heritage preservation that can contribute to the Downtown's specific "neighbourhood" character, we will have a more manageable focus. For example, we may wish to promote the retention (and accent-lighting) of facades and specific buildings of enduring architectural quality, which has proved so successful in Toronto on Front and Wellington, east of the O'Keefe Centre. We should avoid trying to resuscitate archaic physical plant or to save buildings that are not historical, but merely old (or architecturally notable only within the narrow confines of this region).

## 8.0 "At the mall, we park for free..."

8.1 Virtually every discussion of downtown revitalization in mid-size urban centres, not only across North America, but throughout the developed world, seems to begin and end with a discussion of traffic congestion and automobile parking. The key consideration is a delicate balance. Hard-headed economic necessity says we should do everything we can to accommodate those, especially Downtown retail and entertainment shoppers, who find it convenient to take their automobile to shop. Bundles and durables are not easily accommodated on the HSR, and most middle-aged or suburban couples no longer go to the theatre or the market on the bus. On the other hand, we want to promote increased transit ridership, and we must pay a realistic "economic rent" for the considerable public and private investment we have in parking garages and parking lots in the Downtown. Transit can also offer a safe and practical alternative to the private motor vehicle for hospitality patrons, students and those without access to motor vehicles. Some measure of congestion may even be a positive indication of commercial success. As noted



neo-traditionalist developer Robert Davis observed: "Any town worth its salt has a parking problem".

8.2           The convenience of mall parking is likewise often overlooked. The mall parking lot conveys the impression of being close-by and safe, even if it is no closer "as-the-crow-flies" than secondary parking in downtown, or parking "ramps". Part of the success of areas like James Street North and Hess Village lies in the illusion that parking is convenient and available on or near the street. It is possible that the complaint that downtown shopping has "no parking" should be addressed as both a price and a convenience issue. In fact, in an age of the "loonie" and the "twonie", the resistance to relatively expensive but convenient on-street parking may be lessening, as two dollars becomes pocket change for many drivers.

8.3           What has not lessened, however, is the universal distaste (whether in Hamilton, Toronto, New York City or Simcoe) for the parking enforcement program. Is it possible that people would tolerate higher rates in exchange for a lower degree of over-time enforcement? At a minimum, it is time that municipal authorities addressed the Downtown without specific reference to the exigencies of municipal bookkeeping. As long as by-law enforcement and parking authorities must operate "in the black", there will continue to be resistance to ideas that might generate new business taxes at the cost of reduced parking revenues.

8.4           What is a reasonable short-term parking limit?

          There have been a variety of experiments with parking time-limits, but too often the terms are geared to the time it takes to undertake a purposeful shopping visit or a business luncheon (or at times when patrons likely anticipate paying for parking in any event). The effort seems aimed at discouraging downtown employees from cluttering-up on-street and adjacent off-street parking spaces, and accommodating the shopper who knows what he or she wants. Parking validation programs tend to suffer from the same underlying assumptions, which discourage casual and extended downtown visits.

8.5           In a mall setting, employees are encouraged to park somewhat farther from the immediate area, but employees share the benefits of "free" parking. Likewise, while the mall is a "destination" shopping centre, it would never survive on the trade of those (excluding grocery shoppers) who come to the mall with an itemized, time-limited shopping list.

8.6           Downtown parking policy should promote the concept of leisurely shopping and leisurely dining. A movie or a concert takes more than two hours; so does an enjoyable dinner. We should set more realistic timing for any initiatives aimed at relaxing parking charges or parking enforcement, and do so without the nuisance factor of parking validation. It is also in the public interest to encourage low-cost commuting options for

those who work in the downtown service and retail trades, for many of whom transit is a poor alternative to the automobile. Both these measures would help to "level the playing field" with the malls.

## 9.0 The "vacant lot" problem

9.1 In common with most major urban centres, Hamilton's Downtown has a significant volume of vacant land and abandoned buildings adjacent to the core. The Economic Development Department's "development opportunities" map, which shows vacant lots in bright red, makes the situation plain. The reasons are numerous. Many older structures were acquired at a time when it appeared that Downtown real estate would recover to its glory days of the 50s and 60s, and the short-lived North American boom in downtown real estate that occurred in during the 80s. Many old structures have been demolished, because they were not physically sound, because their renovation was uneconomic, and because our Federal and Municipal tax and assessment rules favour depreciation and demolition of physical structures rather than their restoration.

9.2 While there is need to come to the aid of those who have Downtown commercial and residential buildings, there is also a need to rebalance the factors that discourage building owners from keeping properties leased, and from keeping buildings in tact when business factors exact a penalty for doing so. We must find a way to promote leasing rather than vacancies, and to provide those with vacant lands with both positive and negative incentives to develop them or to enhance their use in anticipation of development.

9.3 Another important but less evident negative feature of the vacant lot problem lies in the relatively extensive area covered by our Downtown. For a "neighbourhood" that serves as the primary central business district (CBD) for a region of fewer than 500,000 people, the Hamilton Downtown covers a vast and often unconnected area that would be more than adequate for a much larger metropolitan area. Although we cannot remake urban geography, we should address this problem realistically and creatively.

9.4 Some see the Downtown as the area between Bay and Wellington, from Hunter to Wilson. Others would extend it to include Victoria in the east, and Queen, or even Locke, in the west. This is a vast area within which to focus a redevelopment effort, or to define as a "Downtown neighbourhood" separate from the other lower city neighbourhoods that abut the Downtown. The north limit of the Downtown area from Bay to Wellington, for example, if tracked along York/Wilson, runs eleven city blocks.

9.5 We must find a way to integrate Hess Village with the public institutional uses to the east, especially those which have the potential for making the Sheraton, the Art Gallery, the Convention Centre, Hamilton Place and Copps Coliseum more attractive for visitors, as well as making these facilities live up to their original promise as significant contributors to the vitality of the whole Downtown. In other regions, large farmers



markets and large libraries are major magnets for people, and produce significant spin-off trade (the Winnipeg Forks; Fanueil Hall and Harvard Square in Boston; Lonsdale Quay in North Vancouver; etc.). We must find a way to reintegrate the Farmers Market and the Central Library into the street life and commercial environment of Downtown. (In Kitchener, for example, there is discussion about its famed market being relocated onto public roadways, rather than being kept indoors).

9.6           While no-one can force-feed "multiculturalism" outside of the Epcot Centre, there is a considerable potential, demonstrated by James Street North, for promotion of ethno-cultural retailing and hospitality trade, aimed at the broader market. A simple focus on restaurants and terrace bars made a great retail success of ethnic hospitality marketing in Toronto's Danforth, Montreal's Duluth/Prince Arthur district, and one of the most intractable of downtown challenges, Detroit's "Greektown". For example, an Italian-market focus, featuring food, fashion and household design goods, modelled on Toronto's Corso Italia (St. Clair West), has evident potential with minimal public spending and public encouragement. Similarly, there is potential for developing a Downtown marketplace that would appeal to the Golden Horseshoe's expanding east Asian population.

9.7           In an era of high technology and discriminating entertainment spending, it may be more effective to build "connections" in the Downtown through the use of walkways, floral plantings, landscaping and the linking of surface parking lots. Urban design features (like "thematic" lighting or "signature" colours, such as awnings) are much more effective than the somewhat passive and sophisticated links effected by facade and historic building preservation. Styling downtown as a centre of technology, communications and contemporary arts may create interesting opportunities to use patterned lighting, facade illumination, street-level neon and light-banding, and similar measures. On a year-round basis the foregoing innovations will likely prove more compelling than subtle design and heritage linkages that practically require a Michelin guidebook to appreciate. A continuous pattern of street accent-lights or strip-neon lighting would also be a useful adjunct to efforts to link disparate Downtown districts into an integrated whole.

9.8           The redevelopment of George Street and the adjoining vacant lots, the reintroduction of Jackson Square into King Street, the widening and seasonal floral enhancement of sidewalks, the encouragement of hospitality-related encroachments, and the introduction of in-season landscaping and off-season parking, would do a great deal to promote more pedestrian interest and connection throughout the Downtown. Likewise, some measures to protect key intersections and key stretches of streets from the sterilizing effects of institutional, street-level uses would help build an interesting street culture. While institutional and financial services uses often favour (and can uniquely afford) prime locations, they generally have street activity only within relatively confined daylight periods on weekdays.

9.9 Urban land economics play a key role in downtown revitalization. If investors guess wrong about business cycles and land-price trends, they can find they have paid too much for downtown sites. In these circumstances, they may choose simply to hold the land at the lowest maintenance cost, until the opportunity to recapture some of their losses presents itself, or until they are in a better position to realize the financial loss associated with a poorly performing investment. By carrying investments at "book value", investors can avoid realizing a loss in a way that might negatively affect the structure of their debt obligations, or their tax liabilities, or their performance commitments to their principal shareholders (or even simply admitting to themselves that they made a mistake and paid too much).

9.10 The consequences of refusing to relinquish property assets at current market valuations, however, can have serious implications for moving ahead with Downtown redevelopment opportunities. Waiting for things to get better financially can take a long time, and in the interim, significant downtown parcels lie beyond the reach of builders and investors willing to acquire properties at their realistic current values. The "success" of the recent sales in the Piggott Block demonstrates that some downtown redevelopment can only occur when an original investor realizes a loss on an investment that was made in more promising circumstances. Downtown properties can have the investment profile of higher-risk commercial resort-property investments, where occasionally only successor investors, paying more realistic prices for the assets, can show profitability.

#### 10.0 Do we need "blockbuster" developments?

10.1 For a generation, those of us in the municipal sector have tried to use public funds to "jump start" the Downtown, by promoting major investments in public or private infrastructure. While these developments, in themselves, have been generally successful, they have never produced the scale of spin-off development that had been promised and anticipated. In fact, the sterility of the King Street "tunnel" east of Bay Street, and the underutilization of the Jackson Square roof and Commonwealth Square, suggest that public projects may have inadvertently contributed to the decline in street-level activity Downtown, rather helping to overcome it.

10.2 The lesson seems to be that municipalities should aim for more "base hits" and fewer "home runs". We have a vast investment in public infrastructure, ranging from Copps Coliseum and the Plus 15 roof of Jackson Square, to the Art Gallery, Convention Centre and Theatre Aquarius. Our additional efforts should be devoted to making these initial investments and existing assets pay bigger dividends for the taxpayers and business people who invested in them in the past.

10.3 Each year, the municipalities sink large amounts of public funds into routine refuse pick-up, horticulture and special events promotion. While these investments should be maintained and perhaps even expanded, it is time that the private sector showed the



same confidence in the future of Downtown. The public sector can provide support, but it should refrain from trying to "buy" revitalization, especially in the present fiscal climate. The public sector should reinforce private business decisions that make sense, and the public sector should stimulate business arrangements by leveraging public assets and public expenditures that would have been made in any event (such as leasing office space, or installing fibre-optic infrastructure, or adjusting levy and regulatory regimes to produce a more positive business climate).

10.4            Given present and near-term future fiscal conditions, however, the Regional Municipality should avoid any situation that requires it to get into a long-term business partnership with a private firm or landlord, other than as a business tenant or vendor of land or rights-of-way. This is not to preclude, however, one of the municipalities taking options on strategic properties. Developing a "marketing prospectus" that aims to interest potential investors, and to address realistically their economic concerns about Downtown business conditions, could make a major contribution to revitalizing key properties and districts within the Downtown. One option might be to offer to match a solid commitment of private-sector investment with some corresponding ratio of public-sector funds in associated and supporting public amenities or infrastructure. But the public authority should always position itself as limiting its risk of loss, even at the expense of foregoing opportunities to share in anticipated profits and revenues.

#### 11.0    How do we get people to come Downtown?

11.1            If you look at the most successful downtowns across North America and Europe, you are stuck with the fact that residents, in particular, do not need to be encouraged "to come downtown". Aside from tourists and visiting business people, who typically see a Downtown as the signature of the city, the most successful Downtowns do not need to encourage people to "come downtown", because they ARE downtown. If one looks at college towns, for example, like Kingston (Ontario) or Heidelberg (Germany) or Florence (Italy), the downtown thrives because its own downtown residents make it an interesting place to work, play and visit.

11.2            Only when Hamilton-Wentworth residents regain their love visiting their Downtown, and only when the desire to live Downtown outstrips the availability of housing, is it realistic to think that our broader promotional efforts will help revitalize Downtown. Out-of-town tourists and investors are unlikely to show more interest and confidence in our Downtown than we do.

11.3            In addition to having a relatively largely number of downtown residents, successful downtowns reflect a diversity of incomes and social strata. Our downtown has neither. Our downtown (in common with too many others across North America) has a relatively small downtown resident population. In addition, the relatively low cost of nearby north-end housing tends to attract a disproportionate number of lower income

residents. While being able to offer reasonably priced housing for low-income people is a positive feature of Hamilton's downtown, it inevitably militates against economic and social diversity. In our case, moreover, this lack of social diversity has been accentuated by concentrating most of the social services and extended health care services in this area, not just for the Hamilton area, but for the much of the area encompassing Niagara and Mid-West Ontario.

11.4           The net effect of this concentration is to produce a relatively smaller population of middle-income residents than would be seen elsewhere. This 'concentration' of lower-income residents also detracts from the important social goal of a heterogeneous social structure in the central city. It has the collateral effect of attracting a disproportionate number of people with a complex array of social, medical and psychological needs to settle in the downtown, to be convenient to these support services. This sequence of events has the by-product of giving the Downtown a distinctive but not especially positive aspect to the casual visitor, and it materially limits the market for a wider range of goods, commercial services and "entertainment" uses. Of course, we should not look to displace low-income Downtown residents, but as we expand the resident population of Downtown, our goal should be more social and income diversity.

11.5           We should adopt one of the long-standing adages of tourism promotion, which holds that if you make your community interesting for your own residents, the rest of the world is much more likely to believe you when you promote its merits externally. "Boosterism" failed in Buffalo's economic-development and tourism promotions because, in large measure, Buffalo area residents didn't believe in their own message, as they demonstrated with their investment, housing and shopping choices. If we can make our Downtown a popular residential community, for a full range of social and economic groups, it will have the diversity and interest that will spawn other investments. In simple terms, if the Downtown has lots of housing and lots of entertainment opportunities, the rest will follow. We should not need to subsidize expensive free-standing "destination" facilities, in the hope that out-of-town visitors will salvage our downtown with their tourism and entertainment dollars.

## A VARIETY OF PRESCRIPTIONS FOR A VARIETY OF SYMPTOMS

### 12.0           Retailing

12.1           Downtowns have spent too long fighting a rear-guard action against contemporary trends in retailing, commerce and manufacturing. As it stands now, we have far more conventional retail space Downtown than even a buoyant market could be expected to support. We should design our strategy to embrace those aspects of contemporary economic trends that can, with modification, be served better from a Downtown location, either due to market, cost or adaptive reuse. Some markets for "category killers" and "box stores" would likely be more easily accessed from a downtown



location (for example, those geared to Generation X or tourists). In major US and British centres, there are good examples of "box stores" thriving in downtown locations where the marketing is targeted: HMV, LL Bean, Sports Authority, Barnes & Noble, and similar outlets have demonstrated the potential direct and indirect impact of a good Downtown location for a "box store" use.

12.2 In addition to the idea of specialty market "box stores" in a downtown location, our Downtown has considerable potential to take advantage of the longer-term relative weakness of the Canadian dollar and the proximity of US air and road access, by attracting name-brand US "outlet" chains to our Downtown, both to serve the US travel market and our own Southern Ontario domestic market. Enticing US firms without a Canadian presence to our Downtown has considerable potential to give us a distinctive market niche, while allowing major US firms to "test" the Canadian market at a lower risk.

Action Step #1:

*The Regional Chairman, the Mayor and the Chairman of Economic Development & Planning, with the support of the two CAOs and the Director of Economic Development, should initiate specific contacts at a senior level with targeted leading US "niche" retailers (such as Barnes & Noble or L.L. Bean), with a view to recruiting such firms to locate a major facility in Downtown.*

*To support this effort, staff from the City and the Region, with the aid of the development community and the BIAs, should prepare a detailed comparison of the cost of doing business in Downtown Hamilton, in relation to the costs in other downtown locations and comparable suburban locations.*

13.0 Commercial Properties

13.1 In keeping with the concept of staying ahead of emerging economic trends and cost-structures, we see from experience elsewhere that older buildings can be a platform for the new economy. Renovations to space extensive but inefficient older commercial buildings can make them attractive to software houses, design studios, and call-centres.

13.2 Hamilton is well positioned to take advantage of these trends. In industries such as contemporary music, advertising, design and internet services, a number of features combine to make Downtown as attractive as other similarly positioned inner-city micro-economies. The features include: the availability of low-cost space; convenient access to the Toronto marketplace, and excellent fibre-optic and courier services; and, a computer-literate workforce with convenient support from Mohawk, McMaster, Sheridan and Waterloo institutions and a number of commercial suppliers.

Action step #2:

*City and Regional staff, in co-operation with members of the Hamilton Society of Architects, should contact landlords of major vacant commercial buildings, seeking permission to develop architectural renderings of possible adaptations of existing commercial and residential space, suitable for artists, designers, software houses, studios, loft apartments and similar uses. The proposed Downtown Co-ordinator would have this as a principal responsibility, but in the interim, the initiative should be managed by the Director of Economic Development, on behalf of the City and the Region.*

13.3 Downtown Hamilton has better fibre-optic connections than most of the Greater Toronto Area, including the potential for excellent communications linkages with the Northeastern United States through the Niagara Frontier. These connections have the potential for greatly enhancing the region's appeal for association headquarters and commercial "back-office" uses, both of which require the type of office space so plentiful in Downtown. But Ontario business people tend not to think of Hamilton as a communications centre, so we must develop take steps to broadcast that message.

Action Step #3:

*The Region and the City should champion the creation of improved fibre-optic network opportunities, radiating from the Downtown. To demonstrate the potential of fibre-optic infrastructure and our commitment to a modern Downtown economy, the Region and the City, through the CAOs and Hamilton and Wentworth Libraries, should sponsor the development of a Downtown-centred public-sector network infrastructure over the next twelve months, in co-operation with educational institutions and the regional cable television industry.*

13.4 The Region and the City should also promote improved telephone and postal services, as the basis for promoting the Downtown as a focal centre for national and regional associations and societies, as well as for call-centre uses. Special efforts should be made to entice the Canadian Society of Association Executives to have its conventions and meetings in Hamilton-Wentworth, in order to give us the opportunity to encourage its institutional members to consider Downtown Hamilton as a potential site for both headquarters and back-office functions.

Action step #4:

*The Region and the City (through HECFI) should make a special effort to cultivate the Canadian Society of Association Executives, with a view to confirming its convention in Hamilton in 1997 and doing everything feasible to ensure a large participation by its members. When the convention is held in Hamilton, the Region's Economic Development Committee members and staff should make a special effort to demonstrate the strength of*



*the potential of Downtown as an "association headquarters" node.*

#### 14.0            Commercial Property Redevelopment

14.1            The Region and the City should work together to minimize the cost of doing business downtown, and to impose disincentives for vacating, demolishing and underutilizing Downtown commercial property.

14.2            Using the new provisions of the Municipal Act, the Region should impose licensing requirements on vacant lots that are used primarily for paid short-term stay and long-term rental parking lots, aimed at promoting their highest and best use. Licensing fees should be imposed to offset any property tax advantage realized by demolition, and licensing conditions should include provision for landscaping, transit shelters, surface treatment and handicapped access. Special efforts should also be made to enforce any site maintenance conditions imposed as a requirement of demolition or redevelopment approval.

#### Action Step #5:

*The Region and the City should explore the feasibility of developing a commercial parking lot licensing by-law, and a site maintenance by-law for non-paid or non-parking-lot uses. The objective would be to ensure that floral plantings and street furniture are prominent features of vacant lots, and the licensing fees should be set at a rate that offsets the property tax gains realized by building demolition, and provides a financial spur to develop vacant lots. Councillor Frank D'Amico, as Authority Chairman, and the Hamilton Parking Authority may wish to pursue this and related parking initiatives.*

14.3            Recognizing that assessment reform may take some time, and may not be as favourable as anticipated, the municipalities should take steps now, even if it has the effect of reducing the amount of taxes paid by current businesses. City staff should assist existing landlords and commercial tenants to minimize their realty and business tax liability through careful designation of their property uses. City staff should lend their considerable technical and analytical resources to support tax appeals by established businesses, and conversely, pursue aggressively any appeals from property owners leaving properties vacant or proposing demolition of useful buildings.

#### Action Step #6:

*The Region and the City should create a "Business First Program" and/or a "One Stop Shopping" concept for dealing with Downtown tax and assessment issues. So that appealing property owners get relief as quickly as possible, the City and the Region should determine whether they can facilitate a process through which the Ontario Municipal Board would agree to mediate settlements between the Assessment Commissioner and the*

*appellants, especially those affecting existing non-institutional commercial uses, or as part of an agreement with specific landlords for the redevelopment of their underutilized properties.*

14.4 The City and the Region should explore the potential for granting property tax exemptions under the Municipal Act for municipal and quasi-municipal uses, including time-limited exemptions for commercial buildings that lease to local government tenants (City, Regional Municipality, school boards, etc.).

Action Step #7:

*The Region's Financial Services staff and the City's Treasury staff should explore measures to grant full or time-limited property tax exemptions to municipal and cultural facilities offering municipally financed programs and services to the community, to be effective for the 1997 taxation year. To cushion the potential negative effect on school boards, the Region and the City should consider a grant to phase-in these exemptions.*

14.5 It should be the responsibility of the Downtown Coordinator to recruit new commercial and retail tenants (both long-term and shorter-term), or to relocate them to more suitable downtown locations. It would also be the responsibility of the Downtown Coordinator to facilitate meetings with property owners and prospective investors, either individually, or on a block-by-block basis, with a view to creating redevelopment opportunities. The Downtown Coordinator would be particularly conscious of the objective of ensuring that properties remain leased and in occupancy, and to use the range of commercial leasing and business plan development resources available through the Economic Development Department.

15.0 Housing

15.1 The future of Downtown may depend on its commercial and retail vitality, but its commercial and retail vitality depend on our ability to increase substantially the size of the Downtown "micro-economy". Some of this growth in the "micro-economy" may be produced by increased day-use by shoppers, office workers and visitors, but the most sustained and enduring foundation for the Downtown economy would be to generate a larger, more diverse resident population. If we redefine the Downtown as its own "neighbourhood", we find that the Downtown resident population is relatively small. We would propose to double the residential population over the next seven years, with a judicious mix of middle-income housing, lower-income housing and "specialty" housing (students, "lofts", seniors). The numerous vacant lots in the immediate vicinity of Downtown would form the core of this effort to produce new housing.

15.2 The promotion of new residential projects will focus on rebalancing the mix of residents in the Downtown, including lofts for artists, and mixed-use developments that



would cater to those in such industries as computers and graphic design (Lister Block?).

15.3 Responsibility for spear-heading housing projects should fall to the City of Hamilton Housing Corporation, with the support of the City, the Region, and the City Parking Authority.

Action Step #8:

*Over the next twelve months, the City of Hamilton Housing Corporation, under the chairmanship of Councillor Bob Charters, should "option" several properties, and develop a prospectus for them individually or collectively. (The commercial real estate professionals with a regular involvement Downtown should be part of the effort to redevelop targeted sites, and their efforts should complement those of the Housing Corporation.) Officials of the Housing Corporation should also meet with officials of the Parking Authority, to identify sites that may lend themselves to redevelopment, or that might be used to assist in meeting parking requirements for new residential or commercial projects.*

16.0 Strategic Redevelopment

16.1 With the advice of the many Stakeholders in Downtown, municipal government should (either directly or through an agency, such as the City's Housing Corporation) identify four or five major potential redevelopment sites, all on or within two blocks of King Street. These sites would be optioned, and either an investment prospectus or a call for proposals would be developed to interest potential investors. The objective would be to create two or more major redevelopment projects, as "climate builder" for Downtown revitalization. Among the tools to be employed would be a relaxation of requirements for parking, park dedication and other levies and fees.

16.2 In the Downtown Charette, considerable mention was made of the potential to link the Downtown with the Waterfront and the Escarpment. As a practical matter, the most underdeveloped linkage is between the Downtown and the North End, including the Harbour Lands and the West Harbour. Consideration could be given to the creation of better transit linkages to serve this area, and moving ahead with more inviting access routes, such as the proposed Ferguson Avenue "boulevard" treatment, south of Cannon.

16.3 In an effort to forge better links between the various successful areas of Downtown, it is proposed that the Region and the City sponsor the redevelopment and revitalization of (1) the area between King and Cannon on James North, including York between Bay and John; (2) the area between Hess and the Convention Centre, on the George Street right-of-way, but incorporating and reconfiguring some of the adjacent lands and institutional buildings; and, (3) the area between Theatre Aquarius and the Broadway Cinema, to King Street East. The objective would be to promote a year-round, all-season

pedestrian linkage along these three corridors, using lighting, street-hardware, plantings and commercial uses.

16.4 Consideration might be given to "opening up" the Summers Lane enclosure and improving the potential for pedestrian flows through the west wall of the parking garage towards the George Street right-of-way.

16.5 Following on the proposal from the Downtown Charette, discussions should be undertaken with Jackson Square and Eaton Centre management, concerning the ways in which Jackson Square and the Eaton Centre could be more effectively "opened up" to York, James and King.

16.6 As provided in the Region's contract with Philip Utilities Management Corporation, the Philip Environmental group of companies should be asked to move ahead on its commitment to relocate most of its corporate functions to a Downtown location, ideally one with a new or redeveloped building.

Action Step #9:

*The various proposals outlined under the heading "Strategic Initiatives" should be refined by the Downtown Partnership, and carried forward by Economic Development and HECFI staff, with assistance from other Regional and City officials, under the overall joint direction of the two Chief Administrative Officers.*

17.0 Transportation

17.1 The Downtown Charette proposed that consideration be given to the installation of two-directional traffic on James North and South, and on King and possibly Main. The proposal included the concept of a so-called counter-flow transit lane (westbound) on Main Street. Such a proposal may be too extensive for a community that has come to rely on the speed and convenience of its one-way street system. However, there is merit in partial implementation of the proposal.

17.2 It is suggested that King Street be converted to a two-directional street from Ferguson to Queen, and the number of through lanes be reduced to two westbound and one eastbound. The balance of the right-of-way would be converted to flower-plantings, shrubbery, sidewalk widenings, and retail/restaurant encroachments in the warmer months, and three-hour no-charge on-street parking during the off-season. Consideration might also be given to reversing the flow on James Street, to facilitate northbound connection between Downtown and the Waterfront, including the James North commercial district and to promote enhanced development opportunities for the CN Station.

17.3 Drawing on the successful experience of Denver, consideration should be



given to establishing a no-charge belt-line bus service (without transfers) on a Queen/Main/Ferguson or Wellington/King/Queen loop. Consideration might also be given to having the Downtown service vehicles somewhat distinctive in either equipment design or exterior markings. The City of Brampton, for example, apparently makes use of a double-decker bus for limited service.

17.4 Along with Winnipeg, Ottawa and Quebec City, Hamilton-Wentworth is one of the few major urban centres without light rapid transit or conventional rapid transit. The revitalization of the Downtown and the North End, and improving the linkages between the Mountain and the Lower City might be facilitated by the installation of some form of light rapid transit connection or funicular railway between the north Mountain (including parking) and the Waterfront, with convenient Downtown connections. While this idea has been considered in some guise for generations, its consideration as a development tool for Downtown and the Waterfront, rather than simply a transit project, may justify its more serious consideration this time.

17.5 Consideration should also be given to the establishment of dedicated multi-passenger lanes on Downtown arterials, primarily to serve HSR vehicles.

17.6 The Region should negotiate with the Student Councils at both Mohawk and McMaster for the provision of a no-fare "downtown routes" bus pass, to be financed as part of the annual roster of student activity fees.

17.7 At the same time as altering the direction of traffic on King and James is being evaluated, consideration should be given to the merit of a permanent closure of the south "leg" of King Street, between James and Hughson or John and Hughson, with the attendant relocation of transit bus staging to a parallel street or bus "mall".

Action Step #10:

*Proposals for carrying out the measures outlined under the heading "Transportation" should be refined by the Regional Commissioner of Transportation and appropriate Hamilton City officials, in consultation with the Downtown Partnership, and presented for consideration by the Regional Transportation Services Committee and the Transportation & Environment Committee of the City.*

17.8 Downtown should allow universal 3-hour parking off-street parking in all municipal lots, at no charge to the user. The charge for on-street parking should be one-dollar per hour, with a metered maximum of three dollars.

Action Step #11:

*The City of Hamilton Parking Authority should consider proposals to institute a*

*universal 3-hour off-street municipal parking charge, before November 1, 1996. The Region's Transportation Services Committee should also consider opportunities to expand the availability of metered and unmetered on-street parking, coincident with proposals for reducing the width of main Downtown arteries.*

#### 18.0 Land-Use Planning & Design Controls

18.1 The Downtown should be designated a secondary planning area, and created a separate "neighbourhood" within the City of Hamilton and Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Official Plans.

18.2 Main Street should be developed as the premier institutional address for Hamilton-Wentworth Region, featuring such uses as City Hall, the Board of Education, the Court House and commercial and governmental addresses. As such, there should be extensive landscaping and street hardware, and the use of portable signage should be restricted to the greatest possible extent between the University and Victoria.

18.3 To the extent that the City of Hamilton determines that buildings have heritage and architectural value, the City should seek to acquire facade easements rather than entire buildings. Given the present fiscal climate, the City should seek to acquire facade easements by dedication as a condition of development, rather than purchasing them. Likewise, given the Regional Municipality's financial challenges, the Region should not find itself acquiring real estate to promote aesthetic objectives.

18.4 Regional offices should be used to lever developments, and be prepared to move periodically to stimulate downtown redevelopment projects. If appropriate, the Region should reconsider its near-term decision to occupy the Wentworth Court House, particularly if another, new institutional user could be found for that property and the Region's office requirements could be used to lever an additional downtown development.

#### Action Step #12:

*Under the direction of the Regional Clerk and the CAO, the program of relocation should begin immediately, with the objective of relocating all available regional offices by mid-1997. Although some "rounding out" of existing staff accommodation needs is justified, the majority of available Regional office space, including the offices of the Chairman and the CAO, should be relocated to properties where the office-space lease would create new development opportunities, rather than merely being located in an existing properties in east Downtown.*

*To launch this exercise, the Region or the Hamilton Housing Corporation should consider a Request for Proposals approach to the selective redevelopment of key sites, using Regional office space as a factor in improving the economic viability of a*



*redevelopment proposal.*

18.5 As part of the effort to promote the second-tier of streets parallel to King Street, consideration should be given to the potential for redeveloping the interior of the lots facing King William, especially between James and Hughson, provided that the mass and height of the proposals reflect a scale that is consistent with surrounding properties.

18.6 In an effort to parallel the aesthetic impact of mall-imposed design standards, the BIAs should consider the feasibility of requiring a uniform awning or signage standard for areas with a commercial affinity. To make the Downtown more "mall like", municipal authorities and BIAs should investigate ways in which landlords and commercial tenants could be persuaded to enter into risk/reward agreements to promote consistency in the application of marketing, urban design, business focus, store facades, selection of types of businesses, etc.

18.7 The Hamilton Society of Architects, and those participating in its Downtown Charette, have contributed a number of exciting ideas on possible development opportunities within Downtown, including the adaptive re-use of a number of buildings and sites. These ideas are to be catalogued and presented to the community. This material can form an excellent basis for introducing prospective investors to the many exciting opportunities for Downtown revitalization, as well as helping us here in the community to look afresh at a Downtown that can become too familiar in its existing format.

18.8 Assuming that the Regional office relocation effort proves successful, space will be vacated in the Ellen Fairclough Building and potentially in other Downtown office buildings. While there is apparently an abundance of Class B office space Downtown, the priority of geographically targeted redevelopment justifies some specific new office space being developed. However, as existing space is vacated, there will be need to recruit replacement tenants, especially for "government" buildings. As Provincial and Federal consolidation and down-sizing proceeds, we should put forward a strong case for scattered "field offices" being consolidated in Hamilton as a major regional centre for senior levels of government.

## 19.0 Strategic Initiatives

19.1 The entertainment dollar holds one of the greatest potential sources of revenue for the Downtown. To sustain entertainment spending Downtown, we must sustain our major cultural attractions and encourage them to focus on a mainstream, community-oriented market. To make the best use of the facilities already in place, we may wish to explore the potential for more partnerships and strategic alliances among Theatre Aquarius, the Art Gallery, "Hamilton Philharmonic", Opera Hamilton, Football Hall of Fame, etc. with Ontario-wide and Western New York State counterparts. The interests of the Downtown are best served if the events in the HECFI facilities attract the

widest possible audience (both in numbers and geographic extent). The most lucrative HECFI dates should not be routinely allocated to community events with more limited appeal and greater scheduling flexibility.

19.2 Special efforts should be made to utilize the extensive collection of the Art Gallery (especially potentially large-appeal collections like the Gallery's Group of Seven holdings). The great success of limited-run, advance-ticketed attractions is evident in such events as the Barnes Collection at the Art Gallery of Ontario and, most recently, the stunning success of the Jackson (Mississippi) exposition of the Russian Hermitage Collection.

Action step #13:

*The Regional and City CAOs, the Director of the Art Gallery and the members of the Board of the Art Gallery should discuss ways in which the Region could assist in the mounting of a major exhibition from the Gallery's permanent collection, aimed at mass-marketing the Art Gallery during 1997.*

19.3 In the interests of building professional sports use of Copps Coliseum, Economic Development should convene a meeting of the Mayors and Regional Chairmen/County Executives from Quebec City, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Nashville, San Francisco, Atlanta, New Orleans, etc., to consider developing a business proposal to the NHL for a "Second Division" NHL league, on the model of the British Premier Division/Second Division Football League system.

Action step #14:

*With the assistance of the Regional and City CAOs, the CEO of HECFI and the Director of Economic Development should develop a proposal for a Second Division NHL, to be presented to the Mayors and County Executives/Regional Chairmen of interested communities during the 1996-97 NHL season, with a view to making a formal presentation to the NHL Board of Governors in 1997.*

19.4 Municipal support for new public attractions ventures should be limited to Private Act time-limited tax exemptions or a deed of land and waiver of fees. The Region should neither underwrite or guarantee loans, nor commit itself to sharing any operating deficit on an attraction facility. Reinvestment and more market-appealing presentations in the Canadian Football Hall of Fame and Whitehearn could complement new facilities, such as the proposed Canadian Popular Music Hall of Fame.

19.5 The recently announced interest of the Hamilton-Halton Homebuilders Association in Downtown is an important development. It is a vote of confidence by a group that is in a unique position to stimulate positive new development and new energy in



Downtown. It is also important to consider the model selected by those who know the market-place best: builders and developers. They have selected a low-rise, medium-density style of commercial development, which has an appearance quite similar to the mixed commercial/retail style that one sees in successful mixed-use downtown neighbourhoods, like Newbury Street in Boston.

19.6           The Region and the City should explore the concept of expanding the scope of the Homebuilders' initiative into building a neo-traditional neighbourhood on vacant and underutilized property Downtown and in the adjacent North End and Waterfront. The success of communities such as Seaside, Florida, points to the potential to make Downtown attractive to a wider variety of people, and to promote the style of residential community that will bring both vitality and greater residential density to Downtown. Certainly the style of this development closely parallels the development that made for such traditional neighbourhoods as the Durand neighbourhood adjacent to the Downtown, and reflects the potential for neighbourhood integration, such has been achieved on the Ryerson School site. *(See attached article for more details on this concept)*

19.7           To date, with the possible exception of Harbour Town (Memphis), most neo-traditional projects around North America have been suburban in character. Hamilton-Wentworth could put itself on the urban planning map, and reinforce its leadership position in the sustainability movement, with a successful application of the neo-traditional model to an inner-city site. Such a project would also be a concrete example of our efforts to promote intensification and to work within the moratorium on "greenfields" infrastructure expansion.

#### Action step #15

*The City of Hamilton Planning Department and other City agencies, together with the Regional Environment Department, should initiate a review of available sites adjacent to the downtown, suitable for the creation of a neo-traditional neighbourhood, in conjunction with groups such as the Hamilton-Halton Homebuilders and the Hamilton Society of Architects. Plans should be developed for completing all necessary environmental, legal and planning approvals before the end of 1997.*

### TURNING SOUND DREAMS INTO WORKABLE SCHEMES

#### 20.0 Governing structures

20.1           There is a tendency, which is not limited to public-sector organizations, to move from diagnosis to implementing structure, and to leave the design and content of the response to the new structure. But as in business and government, form should follow function, and the strategic and economical use of volunteer time and professional talents should guide the decision to create new or reformed organizational structures. It appears

that we may have lost sight of this basic principle in our eagerness to see action taken on Downtown.

20.2 For several years, the various BIAs and more recently the Founding Board of the GHDCDC have consumed a considerable volume of volunteer hours and staff time, endeavouring to identify the problems facing downtown, and finding practical solutions to them. But the public perception is that there are a lot of organizations, ranging from the Region (Economic Development, Chairman's Office, Transportation, Regional Police Service) and the City (Planning, the Mayor's Office, Parking, Traffic, HECFI, Historical Board) to the Renaissance Project, the BIAs and the Chamber of Commerce, who have been looking at elements of the problems facing Downtown, from various perspectives. The public perception is that we have lots of people looking at the problem, but the problem persists. We must avoid giving the impression to our increasingly impatient Regional Community, that our ultimate solution for the problems of the Region's heart is to create yet another structure, replete with a new set of committees and subcommittees.

20.3 The legislation that gave rise to the community development corporation initiative was passed as something of a "leap of faith" by the previous Ontario Government, but little of that initiative remains. The funding for venture capital initiatives has been spotty and its overall impact a disappointment. Where they have shown any promise at all, and that has not been very common, development corporations appear to have evolved into either economic development corporations or essentially BIAs with a wider range of stakeholders. While the Interim Founding Board has laid the groundwork for the revitalization of the Downtown over the past year, by clarifying the issues and offering possible areas for action, it seems unlikely that a conventional Community Development Corporation can achieve the plan of action outlined in this report, should it be approved, and it would be unfair to ask those involved to attempt the effort with so little prospect of success using the community development corporation vehicle.

20.4 Most of those with an interest in the Downtown, both direct "stakeholders" and concerned citizens, come to the subject representing organizations and firms with a demonstrated interest in the Downtown and the broader community. It seems inefficient and wasteful of existing resources and time to overlay a new, fully elaborated structure on these individuals and to require their organizations and firms to relate to it. It would seem more practical and efficient simply to recruit these organizations, individuals and firms to address those elements of the problem where their time, talents and resources can be best employed. To the extent that the Downtown initiative requires guidance at arm's length from "City Hall" and the Regional Municipality, that can be achieved by a small, leadership-oriented body, focusing on strategic initiatives and using their influence to enlist established groups and individuals to address elements of the tasks at hand.



### Working with, and through, others

20.5 The revitalization of the Downtown will ultimately be the product of a broad-based co-operative effort - a true community partnership. A key aspect of any multi-party partnership, however, is the ability to work with and through others, rather than taking on the whole assignment, or duplicating efforts and talent already in place. As a result, it is recommended that the structure of the proposed development corporation be altered to one of a "Downtown Partnership", with specific task forces and project-assignments enlisting stakeholders from the areas most specifically affected by this report.

By altering the format, we should be able to achieve three results.

First, we can recruit leading members of the business and professional community to join those already involved in the effort to revitalize Downtown, but who would not be in a position to give the time commitment that we have been expecting of the Founding Board.

Second, by giving the responsibility for strategy and direction to the Downtown Partnership, but leaving the implementation effort to individuals and their organizations, we can make better use of the time and talent of those from the community and the Downtown business sector who have been working with the Development Corporation Founding Board with, to be honest, not much to show for their long hours of effort.

Finally, the large collection of municipal and BIA staff who routinely attend meetings of the GHDCDC and the Downtown Initiatives Committee, among others, can be used more effectively in conjunction with the efforts of more task-oriented groups, such as HECFI, the Parking Authority, the Housing Corporation, the BIAs, the Economic Development Department, and other City and Regional groups.

20.6 It is clear from the comments of participants that regular meetings of the GHDCDC are not achieving the action agenda that original membership promised, when the participants were persuaded to volunteer. It is therefore proposed that the proposed Downtown Partnership be reformatted (if necessary by Regional Council and City Council) to allow it to assign specific responsibilities to individual groups of stakeholders and established organizations. The Downtown Partnership would reserve to itself a more narrow and more strategic role, to be carried out by a Partnership Board that meets periodically to review progress and assign work, and with a small but committed group of directors comprised, in the majority, by recognized community leaders from business, labour, community institutions, the media and government. Guiding the Partnership's activities on a weekly basis would be an executive group, consisting of perhaps four or five Partnership Directors and the Downtown Co-ordinator, supported by the participation of a senior staff official from the Region and from the City, designated by the Regional

Chairman and the Mayor, respectively.

20.7 If the proposed Downtown Partnership decides to take advantage of the community development corporation legislation to carry out its tasks, its objects of incorporation should be more general than has been proposed to date, and the weight of the originally proposed structure and the numbers required to be directly involved, should be substantially reduced.

Action step #16:

*The Director of Economic Development should be directed to propose five or six individuals to comprise a Nominating Committee for the proposed Downtown Partnership, with the Nominating Committee reporting to Regional Council and City Council before the end of October.*

Creating the "Downtown Neighbourhood"

20.8 Responsibility for initiating and carrying forward the community consultation process, leading to the creation of the Downtown as a separate neighbourhood should be led by a City of Hamilton Council member, with support from the City's Planning Department. This Council Member should have carriage of the planning program that would lead to the creation of the Downtown Neighbourhood Plan, especially as it relates to consultation with stakeholders, and to be a member of the Board of the proposed Downtown Hamilton Partnership. Since much of the secondary planning process technical work has already been undertaken, this additional step will be largely a matter of communication and reworking existing data and plans.

Action Step #17:

*The work program of the City of Hamilton Planning Department for 1997 should be altered to allow for the creation of a Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan amendment, aimed at creating a separate Downtown Neighbourhood within the City and Regional official plans. In light of his continuing involvement with the Downtown business community and his prominent participation over the past year with the Community Development Corporation, Councillor Marvin Caplan might be the best person to work with the Downtown business and residential community and to lead this effort to develop a Downtown Neighbourhood Plan, working along with the Chairman of the Planning & Development Committee and the Ward Aldermen.*

20.9 It is proposed that specific tasks related to the recommendations in this report and other priorities identified by the proposed Partnership, be assigned to the most appropriate and representative community or public organization. For example, a specific assignment of responsibilities should be negotiated with the City's Housing Corporation, to



take the lead in promoting and assembling land for residential and non-residential redevelopment projects within the Downtown, both by optioning lands held in private ownership and by "leveraging" properties in public ownership, including those held by the Parking Authority. A similar approach should be taken on other priorities, for example by developing a formal business relationship with the BIAs, supplemented by the participation of key stakeholders who are not participating merchants and professionals.

#### A Downtown Co-ordinator

20.10 To ensure that the work of the Partnership proceeds in a timely fashion, it is suggested that the Downtown Partnership engage a full-time, contract employee (Downtown Development and Marketing Co-ordinator or "Downtown Coordinator") with expertise in real-estate finance and urban design, to carry-out these measures and others recommended by the Partnership and those outlined in this report. To ensure continuing effective liaison with the municipal authorities, it is suggested that the Chief Administrative Officer of the Region be designated as the Manager of the Downtown Partnership, with the Downtown Co-ordinator reporting to the Manager of the Partnership for administrative direction. The CAO of the Region would work with the CAO of the City of Hamilton to recruit any staff that can assist in meeting the objectives outlined in this report, and in supporting the work of the Downtown Partnership and the Downtown Coordinator.

20.11 The Downtown Coordinator would hold a position at arm's length from the City of Hamilton and the Region of Hamilton-Wentworth, and he/she would be located in a Storefront location within the Downtown. The cost of the position would be fully funded by the Region of Hamilton-Wentworth, beginning in 1997. In the interim, municipal staff would begin work on the various action steps suggested in this report. The cost of "optioning" properties for Strategic Redevelopment initiatives, especially those in the housing field, would be assumed by the City of Hamilton Housing Corporation, whose letters of incorporation should be modified to embrace the expanded role, if required.

#### Action Step #18:

*The CAOs of the Region and the City should ensure that provision is made to engage a Downtown Co-ordinator, to be interviewed and selected by the Downtown Partnership, and that 1997 budget funds are made available for this purpose, including associated office support and office space. It is suggested that the Co-ordinator be independent of municipal authorities as much as possible, but reporting administratively through the Director of Economic Development and budgeted through the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer of the Region. For this venture to be a success, it will realistically require a commitment of several hundred thousand dollars of public funds, annually, to be shared equally by the Region and the City, ideally from the increase in assessment generated by a revitalized Downtown.*

## The Municipal Response

20.12 While attempting to develop a strategy for mobilizing the community, it falls to the Regional Municipality and to the City of Hamilton to get our own houses in order, on the subject of downtown revitalization. Past and current municipal councils have taken a number of individual initiatives, and the recent spate of adjustments to parking and development fees are clear evidence of good intent. These recent initiatives complement past efforts in the area of physical investments in facilities, streetscaping, parks, and road-side horticulture, but more must be done.

20.13 In taking these measures, however, municipal authorities must be on their guard against conveying an impression of desperation. One might argue, for example, that the blanket exemptions reflected in the waiver of fees is a fairly blunt instrument, and it inevitably applies to developments that one would like to see, and developments that merely reflect the suddenly reduced cost of doing business. Further concessions might best be applied selectively, to encourage modifications in development proposals to meet municipal objectives, or to promote desirable developments that might not otherwise proceed.

20.14 In government as in other fields, the real test of determination to achieve results is assigning time and money to the problem at hand. For its part, the Region's 1997 Operating and Capital Budgets should segregate the full range of expenditures (and revenues) associated with Downtown and related Waterfront activities, including the staff time associated with such activities, all of which are current spread across a number of departments and agencies, ranging from public health and planning, to police and conservation authority. There should be a renewed commitment by municipal authorities to invest in the Downtown, but to do it in a targeted and prioritized manner that reflects both the urgent need and the fiscal environment. While we may not be able to spend much additional money and time in the Downtown, we may find that redirecting it and targeting it to priorities will have a greater impact, and be complementary to the efforts of Downtown stakeholders. These budgets should be reviewed annually by the Partnership, beginning this Fall.

### Action Step #19:

*The Acting Commissioner of Finance for the Region and the Treasurer of the City of Hamilton should arrange for the 1997 City and Region Current and Capital budgets to reflect Downtown activities and priorities, including the measures outlined here.*

*In particular, consideration should be given to cost-sharing on the office of the Downtown Co-ordinator and related activities (estimated to cost several hundred thousand dollars annually), a program of capital improvements (street-scaping, curb-side flower-planters, roadway and traffic improvements, sidewalk widenings, etc.), estimated to cost*



*between \$2 million and \$4 million, and some initial capital investment funds to support Downtown attractions with a demonstrated business case to support their ongoing viability (e.g., Market; revitalized Football Hall of Fame; new tourist, entertainment or cultural attraction; etc.).*

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"STRONG MEDICINE" - SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

-40-

ACTION #	SUMMARY DESCRIPTION *	RESPONSIBILITY **	MEASUREMENT OF SERVICES	PRIORITY (to be determined)
1	Attract key US "niche" retailers	Regional and City CAOs, Regional Chairman, Mayor, and Economic Development	Opening of a key "niche" retailer downtown by January 1/98.	
2	Prepare plans for renovation of key vacant buildings	Development Co-ordinator (interim Economic Development), Hamilton Society of Architects, and City Planning Department	Presentation of renderings to building owners.	
3	Improve fibre-optics opportunities in the downtown	Regional and City CAO's	Downtown network infrastructure by Sept./98	
4	Canadian Society of Association Executive Convention in Hamilton	Economic Development and HECFI	1997 Convention in Hamilton	
5	Develop a commercial parking lot licensing by-law	Regional Chairman, Parking Authority, City Council	Improved vacant lots and reduced demolition for new lots.	
6	A "one-stop shopping" concept for dealing with tax and assessment issues and general development information.	Economic Development, Regional Finance Services and City Treasury, Planning, Building, and Public Works Departments	Reduced business and property tax requirements, successful assessment appeals	
7	Property Tax Exemptions for municipal and quasi-municipal uses.	Regional Financial Services and City Treasury Departments	Exemptions to key properties. Movement of municipal programs/offices into vacant commercial buildings	
8	City Housing option and development prospectus for key downtown properties.	City of Hamilton Municipal Non-Profit Housing Corporation	The development of key site(s) for housing	
9	Implementation of "strategic initiatives" identified in the downtown charette.	Economic Development, HECFI, and Hamilton Society of Architects	Implementation of various "strategic initiatives" in the downtown	
10	Implementation of "transportation" initiatives with the aim of creating a more "people friendly" environment.	Regional Transportation and City Public Works Departments	Improved environment for pedestrians and transit	



11	New parking requirements	Parking Authority and Regional Transportation Department	A universal free 3 hour off-street municipal parking charge (by Nov. 1996). Expanded on-street parking at a rate of one dollar per hour, maximum of 3 hours.
12	Relocation of Regional offices to the Downtown	Office of Region / Facilities Management (Regional Clerk)	The development and/or redevelopment of key properties to accommodate Regional offices.
13	Mass-market the Art Gallery	Regional and City CAOs, Director of the Art Gallery	A 1997 major exhibition.
14	Proposal for a "second division" NHL	HECFI, Mayor supported by Economic Development	Formal presentation to NHL Board of Governors in 1997
15	"Neo-traditional" development in neighbourhood surrounding the downtown.	City Planning and Development Department	Suitable plans and proposals for new development for key sites in the surrounding downtown neighbourhoods and on the Waterfront by the end of 1997.
16	Establishment of a "Downtown Partnership"	Regional and City CAOs and Economic Development	Report to City and Regional Councils recommending "Downtown Partnership" before end of October
17	Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan	City Planning and Development Department	Inclusion in 1997 Work Program and completion in 1998.
18	Engage a Downtown Co-ordinator	Region and City CAOs	Establish position and necessary funds in 1997
19	Include funding for initiatives in Current and Capital Budgets	Financial Services and City Treasury Departments	1997 Funding for Downtown - Co-ordinator, related costs and capital improvements.

\* Various actions address the live, work, shop and visit the downtown mission set by the GHDCDC Founding Board at its Facilitation Day.

\*\* All of these actions will fall within the mandate of the to be hired Downtown Co-ordinator with the support of key City and/or Regional staff and the private sector, as required.

# "STRONG MEDICINE" - ACTION PLAN

	CITY OF HAMILTON	REGION OF HAMILTON- WENTWORTH	PRIVATE SECTOR
Living	<p>Action #2 - prepare plans for key buildings</p> <p>Action #8 - develop key properties (MNPHC)</p> <p>Action #9 - strategic initiatives</p> <p>Action #15- plan for neo-tradition neigh'd</p> <p>Action #17 - downtown neigh'd</p> <p>Action #19 - downtown capital budget</p>	<p>Action #2 - plans for key buildings</p> <p>Action #9 - strategic initiatives</p> <p>Action #19 - downtown capital budget</p>	<p>Action #9 - strategic initiatives</p> <p>Action #16 - downtown partnership</p>
Working	<p>Action #1 - attract key U.S. retailers</p> <p>Action #3 - champion fibre optics</p> <p>Action #6 - business first program</p> <p>Action #7 - tax grants</p> <p>Action #9 - strategic initiatives</p> <p>Action #19 - downtown budget</p>	<p>Action #1 - attract key U.S. retailers</p> <p>Action #3 - champion fibre optics</p> <p>Action #6 - business first program</p> <p>Action #7 - tax grants</p> <p>Action #9 - strategic initiatives</p> <p>Action #12 - relocate Regional offices</p> <p>Action #18 - downtown coordinator</p> <p>Action #19 - downtown budget</p>	<p>Action #9 - strategic initiatives</p> <p>Action #16 - downtown partnerships</p>
Shopping	<p>Action #5 - commercial parking requirements</p> <p>Action #9 - strategic initiatives</p> <p>Action #19 - downtown budget</p>	<p>Action #9 - strategic initiatives</p> <p>Action #19 - downtown budget</p>	<p>Action #9 - strategic initiatives</p> <p>Action #16 - downtown partnerships</p>
Visiting	<p>Action #4 - attract associations</p> <p>Action #9 - strategic initiatives</p> <p>Action #11 - parking charges</p> <p>Action #13 - market art gallery</p> <p>Action #14 - 2nd division NHL team</p> <p>Action #19 - downtown budget</p>	<p>Action #4 - attract associations</p> <p>Action #9 - strategic initiatives</p> <p>Action #10 - transportation measures</p> <p>Action #11 - on-street parking</p> <p>Action #13 - market art gallery</p> <p>Action #14 - 2nd division NHL team</p> <p>Action #19 - downtown budget</p>	<p>Action #9 - strategic initiatives</p> <p>Action #16 - downtown partnerships</p>



# A blueprint for downtown

The Spectator  
September 7, 1996

The report on renewing Hamilton's downtown core is filled with down-to-earth ideas but requires our civic leaders to demonstrate accelerated political will.

The latest strategy to renew the faltering heartbeat of downtown Hamilton cannot be shelved. Offering a prudent prescription to save the hub of the region before it dies of heart failure, the new blueprint deserves the top priority of Hamilton-Wentworth politicians and business leaders.

In terms of its comprehensive approach, and down-to-earth ideas, the 34-page game plan prepared by senior city and regional bureaucrats is outstanding. Implementing the 19 proposed action steps will test the ability of Hamilton-Wentworth's politicians and business people, but strong political leadership is pivotal to a brighter future for the inner city.



In contrast to the cautious and legalistic style of many staff reports, the report is a candid, political document. For instance, it questions the conventional wisdom that large, "blockbuster" developments such as Copps Coliseum, the convention centre and the art gallery can salvage downtown by attracting out-of-town tourism and entertainment dollars.

The report says that Hamilton's downtown showcases, although generally successful, haven't produced the spin-off development that was envisaged. "In fact, the sterility of the King Street East 'tunnel' east of Bay Street, and the underutilization of the Jackson Square roof and Commonwealth Square, suggest that public projects may have inadvertently contributed to the decline in street-level activity downtown, rather than helping it."

As the report observes, efforts to promote downtown to investors and residents from other parts of the city and out-of-town will fail if the core isn't attractive to Hamiltonians themselves. Healthy downtowns thrive because their own downtown residents make them interesting 'people places' to live, work, play and visit.

The strategy underlines the potential of converting inefficient, older commercial buildings downtown into business centres that can be a platform of the new economy. With renovations, they could be attractive to software houses, design studios and communications-based businesses including fibre-optic cable and courier services.

To help turn the recommendations into reality, the report proposes an independent czar, acting as a full-time advocate for downtown. The co-ordinator would operate at arm's length from municipal authorities, but work with the region's economic development department and other resources.

A proposed downtown partnership would also be established as a task force to get results. The partnership, consisting of government, business and community representatives, would hire the co-ordinator and identify the priorities.

It won't be cheap to establish the proposed co-ordinator's office. The report projects an investment of "several hundred thousands of dollars," shared by the region and the city. Funds would be needed in the 1997 budget. The price tag is obviously one that doesn't lend itself to an instant rubber-stamp, but a healthier downtown will in turn replenish the region and city coffers.

There is a strong case to be made for a co-ordinator as a key in pulling together all of the efforts to breathe life into downtown. The momentum is going in the right direction, but if the decline of downtown Hamilton is to be halted, the momentum will have to be accelerated.



"ONLY WHEN THE COMMUNITY REGAINS THEIR  
LOVE FOR DOWNTOWN WILL THE COMMUNITY'S  
BROADER PROMOTIONAL EFFORTS FOR THE  
DOWNTOWN BE SUCCESSFULL"

"OUT-OF-TOWN" PEOPLE (TOURISTS, SHOPPERS,  
INVESTORS, BUSINESSES) ARE UNLIKELY  
TO SHOW MORE INTEREST AND CONFIDENCE  
IN OUR DOWNTOWN THAN WE DO!"



## STRATEGY

- A DOWNTOWN HAMILTON PARTNERSHIP OF
- BUSINESS LEADERS/PRIVATE SECTOR
- CITY OF HAMILTON
- REGION OF HAMILTON-WENTWORTH



# HAMILTON DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP





## EXAMINING THE ISSUES....

THE DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY EXAMINES THE MAJOR ISSUES FACING DOWNTOWN IN A NEW, AND OCCASIONALLY PROVOCATIVE WAY, UNDER SUCH HEADINGS AS:

*Are taxes too high and punitive?*

*Is the Downtown safe?*

*Is downtown a place to go through or to?*

*Are heritage properties an asset or a burden?*

*Is parking too expensive and over-policed?*

*What do we do about vacant lots and vacant stores?*

*Do we need more megaprojects?*

*Can Downtown attract residents of all income groups?*

*Does Downtown retailing have a future?*

TRADITIONAL SOLUTIONS

TRADITIONAL PROGRAMS

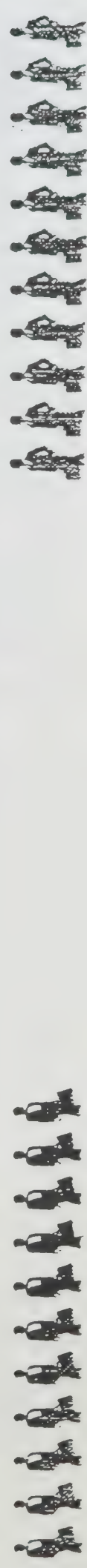
TRADITIONAL THINKING

TRADITIONAL POLES

WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS!

# GETTING MORE PEOPLE TO DOWNTOWN

	CITY OF HAMILTON	REGION OF HAMILTON- WENTWORTH	BUSINESS COMMUNITY/ PRIVATE SECTOR
PEOPLE "WORKING" DOWNTOWN			
PEOPLE "LIVING" DOWNTOWN			
PEOPLE "SHOPPING" DOWNTOWN			
PEOPLE "VISITING" DOWNTOWN			







City of  
Hamilton

DOWNTOWN HAMILTON

# "OPEN FOR BUSINESS"

The City of Hamilton has undertaken a number of key initiatives to encourage new development and redevelopment activity in the downtown area.

New residential and commercial development and redevelopment will save thousands of dollars in development charges and fees in the area generally bounded by Cannon, Hunter, Queen Streets and Victoria Avenue.

	Cannon	Street		
Street	Street	Street		Avenue
	King	Street		
Queen	Main	Street		Victoria
	Hunter	Street	Wellington	



The City of Hamilton is committed to revitalizing its downtown and is offering fee rebates for new development and redevelopment projects.

Act now and take advantage of this unprecedented action. On the back is a list of actions. For further information call Willie Wong, Building Department at 546-2766 or Bill Janssen, Planning and Development Department at 546-4147.

# Downtown Savings

## Before Downtown Initiatives

## After Downtown Initiatives

Development Charges		
Commercial - City	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Commercial - Region	\$2.64 / ft <sup>2</sup>	\$ 0.00
Residential - City	single, semi or row - \$1,565.44 2 or more bedroom apt. - \$894.54 1 bedroom apt. - \$447.27	\$ 0.00 \$ 0.00 \$ 0.00
Residential - Region	single family - \$5,113.00 multiple family - \$3,798.00 apartment - \$2,191.00	\$ 0.00 \$ 0.00 \$ 0.00
Fees *		
Official Plan Amendment	\$1,730.00	\$ 0.00
Zoning By-Law Amendment	\$1,730.00	\$ 0.00
Minor Variance (1 or 2 family dwelling)	\$250.00	\$ 0.00
Minor Variance (all others)	\$400.00	\$ 0.00
Building Permits	\$150.00 for 1st \$10,000.00 of estimated construction value + \$9.00 each additional \$1,000.00	\$ 0.00
Site Plan Application	\$1,020.00	\$ 0.00
Revision of Approved Site Plan	\$410.00	\$ 0.00
5% Parkland Dedication	5% or cash equivalent	0 % or \$ 0.00, if building permit is issued by Sept. 1 1999
Public Parking in the Downtown (designated lots only)	\$0.80/hr - \$1.60/hr	\$ 0.00 (Thursday & Friday evenings & all day Saturday)
Parking Requirements Residential	0.8 spaces per class A dwelling unit	0 spaces for renovations/conversions 0 spaces for new construction
Lot Area Requirements for Multiple Dwellings In "I" Districts	"I" District - 65m <sup>2</sup> (699.68 square feet) lot area per dwelling unit	gross floor area not to exceed 2.85 times the area of the lot

\* Fees are refundable at the time of issuance of a building permit if issued by Sept. 1/99 and the fees are paid for after Aug. 27/96.





## LIFESTYLE

# Bye-Bye, Sub

Phoenix sprawls into the desert at the rate of an acre an hour. Greater crimes have wrecked the tranquil 'burbs of Ozzie and Harriet's time





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# urban Dream



York City stretches clear into Pennsylvania. Strip malls, traffic, fear  
can we bring civility back to suburban life? BY JERRY ADLER



L I F E S T Y L E

# Paved Paradise

The 'new urbanists' are going back to the future to take the edge off edge cities. They want to bring small-town charm to blighted metropolitan landscapes.



JOHN HUMBLE

**V**IEWED FROM THE AIR, THERE'S NO APPARENT REASON why a city like Phoenix, Ariz., already the seventh largest in the nation, couldn't keep growing forever. Four times a year, a pilot from Landiscor, an aerial-surveying company, flies over the city at 20,000 feet, snapping pictures to be assembled into vast photographic maps. They show the white boxes of downtown, the graceful loop of the freeways as they intersect and sort themselves out by compass point, and the gleaming roofs of suburbia stretching to the horizon in nested curves of roads, streets, drives and lanes. The pictures from the end of March show 5,000 more houses than the ones taken three months earlier. Houses squeeze through the gap between two Indian reservations and follow the highways into the desert, which they are consuming at an acre an hour. Excluding federal land, the only thing standing in the way of Phoenix's swallowing the rest of the state, says

*Porches, gables and picket fences—all brand new at Kentlands*

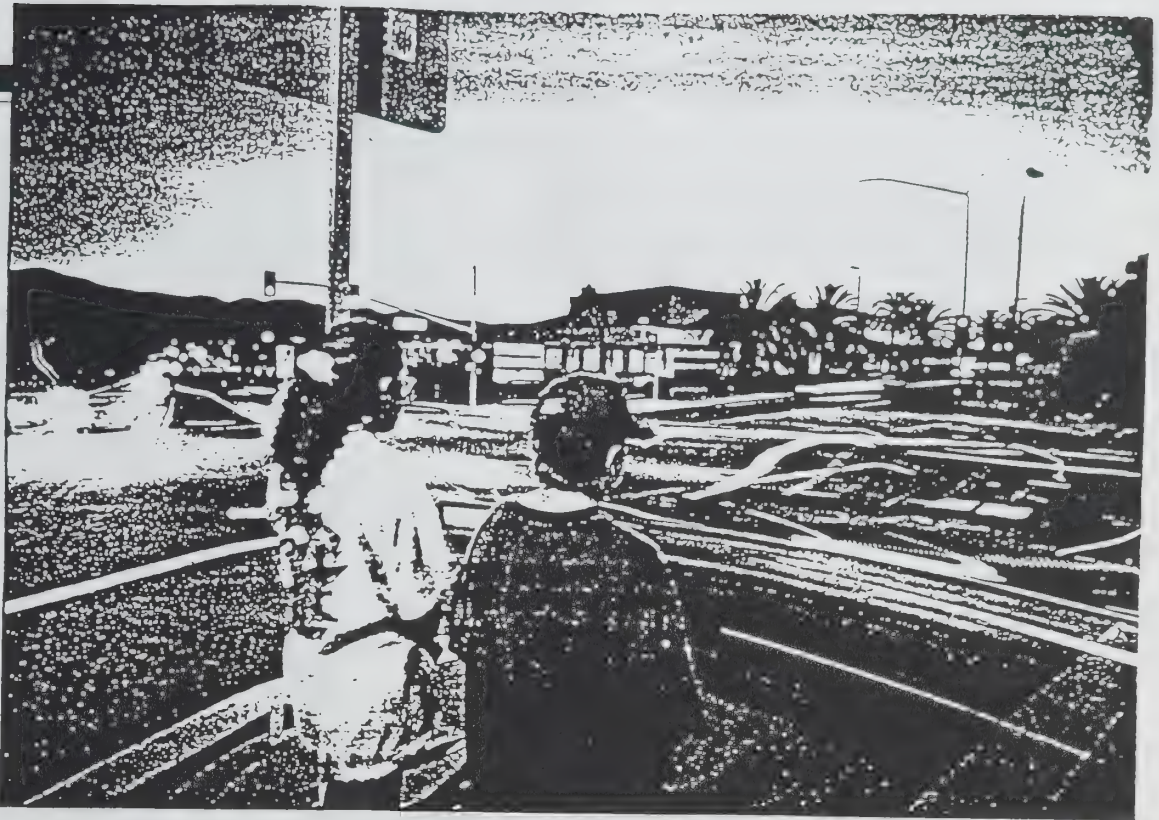
## WONDERFUL TOWN

Some people consider such communities too cute, but cuteness is the glue that holds them together at five units an acre

Michael Fifield, director of the Joint Urban Design Program of Arizona State University, is Tucson.

Unless, that is, you subscribe to the view of former mayor Terry Goddard, that Phoenix is approaching the marginal disutility of suburban sprawl. This is the point at which each new subdivision





JOHN HUMBLE

Kids waiting to cross a multilane road in Temecula, Calif.

## NO STREET OF DREAMS

The 'civic center' of many suburbs, designed for the convenience of the car, is a strip mall along a six-lane highway

to play ball, except in the streets. Communities need parks and outdoor public spaces in which people can gather and interact.

■ **Mandatory design codes:** Obviously, no one with a choice in the matter would want to look out his window at a 7-Eleven. New urbanist practitioners impose elaborate design and zoning controls intended to create harmonious streetscapes. The results can be intensely cute and not to the taste of people unaccustomed to seeing dormers, gables and porticoes on every building. But cuteness is the glue that holds neighborhoods together at five units per acre.

Like most visionary architectural schemes, this idea has sold more books than houses. Its principles were known to planners early in the century, when such charming communities as Scarsdale, N.Y., Mariemont, Ohio, and Lake Forest, Ill., were built. But they were forgotten in the postwar rush to build suburbs on the same principles of efficiency that had been employed in constructing army bases. Their first new application came a decade ago, when Duany and Plater-Zyberk drew up plans for a small resort town on the Florida panhandle, called Seaside. Seaside—with its cozy, narrow streets, its jumble of pastel homes with mandatory front porches—is probably the most influential resort community since Versailles. Prince Charles noted it approvingly in his BBC special on architecture. Since then other "neotraditional" developments have been built in places as far-flung as suburban Maryland (Kentlands, also planned by Duany and Plater-Zyberk) and the outskirts of Sacramento, Calif. (Laguna West, planned by Peter Calthorpe of San Francisco). But the real test of this idea will come in about a year, when the Disney Co. opens its first planned community ever, Celebration, Fla., on a 5,000-acre swath of land near Disney World. After considering a typical subdivision built around a golf course, the company opted for a plan which vice president Wing Chao described as "traditional little-town America." Celebration will either validate the new ur-

subtracts more from the quality than the new inhabitants contribute to the economy by buying wind chimes, mesquite logs and Navajo-motif throw rugs. Many other places in the country are coming round to this view. Most suburbs are exploding in size without even the compensation of economic growth; the Cleveland metropolitan area expanded by a third between 1970 and 1990 even as its population declined. Over roughly the same period, California's population increased by 40 percent while the total of vehicle-miles driven doubled. Maintaining a fleet of cars to navigate among the housing tracts, commercial strips and office complexes of the American landscape now takes 18 percent of the average family budget.

As anyone who reads the fiction in *The New Yorker* knows, Americans mostly live in banal places with the souls of shopping malls, affording nowhere to mingle except traffic jams, nowhere to walk except in the health club. By itself, this hasn't been a reason to stop building suburbs. But economic unsustainability may carry more weight. A conference on "Alternatives to Sprawl" at the Brookings Institution this year electrified by a report from the Bank of America endorsing the formerly elitist view that sprawl in California has created "enormous social, environmental and economic costs, which until now have been hidden, ignored, or quietly borne by society... Businesses suffer from higher costs, a loss in worker productivity, and underutilized investments in older communities." "You can't keep spreading out," says Mike Burton, executive director of Portland, Ore.'s metropolitan government, Metro. "The cost to make roads and sewers gets to the point where it doesn't work."

**T**HE CHALLENGE IS TO DEVISE AN ALTERNATIVE TO SPRAWL, where people can envision their children playing in the streets. It must not evoke "the city," an alien place where by definition middle-class Americans refuse to live. So a growing corps of visionaries, of which the best-known are Miami-based architects Andres Duany and his wife and partner, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, are looking to an even older model—the village," defined as a cluster of houses around a central place that the focus of civic life. Under the banner of "new urbanism," they have promulgated some surprisingly simple and obvious rules for building better suburbs, described in detail on the following pages. They can be roughly summarized in these three principles:

■ **Density:** A typical modern suburb may have one to two dwelling units per acre, and is laid out entirely for the convenience of the automobile. The new urbanism strives for five or six units per acre, including a mix of housing types: detached houses, row houses, apartments, "granny flats" tucked away above the garages. In theory—and the new urbanism still exists mostly in theory—the village would extend no more than a quarter-mile from the center of the edge and include a transit stop and a place to buy a quart of milk and a newspaper (actually, probably, a decaf latte and a copy of *The New Yorker*, but the point is the same).

■ **Civic space:** Suburbs—except for the streets—consist of almost exclusively private space, much of it devoted to the single most useless form of plant life in all botany, the ornamental lawn. A suburb is a place that's two-thirds grass but with nowhere for kids



## L I F E S T Y L E

banism with the imprimatur of Disney—"safe for middle-class consumption"—or prove the point of its critics, that it's a plot to lure unwitting citizens into living in theme parks.

You can look at Phoenix as a pretty good example of what the new urbanism is up against. It is among the five fastest-growing metropolises in the country, and few places are as relentlessly suburban in character. It has a downtown so exiguous that a pedestrian outside its biggest office building at 9 on a weekday morning is a phenomenon as singular as a cow in Times Square. Meanwhile the new subdivisions race each other toward the mountains. Del Webb Corp., a major national developer, recently won approval over heated opposition for a 5,600-acre project in New River, 30 miles north of downtown and at least 10 miles beyond the outer edge of existing development.

The environment, which to developers used to just be the stuff they knocked down to make room for houses, is now a cherished selling point. There is a catch, according to Frances Emma Barwood, a city council member who represents most of the sparsely populated northeast quadrant of Phoenix: "The people who bought houses in Phase One [of a popular development] were told they'd be surrounded by beautiful lush deserts, but instead they're surrounded by Phases Two and Three."



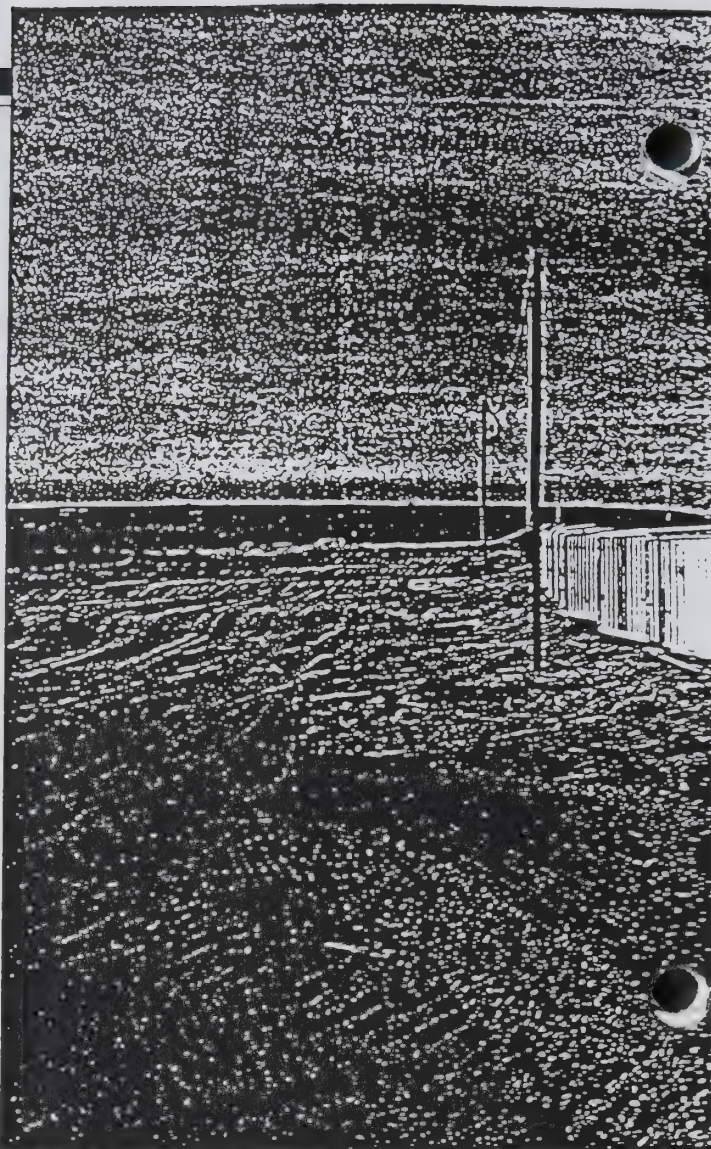
**Seaside planner**  
American city planning  
want to hell during  
World War II, says  
Andres Duany, the  
architect who, with his  
wife and partner,  
Elizabeth Plater  
Zyberk, designed the  
neotraditionalist town  
of Seaside, Fla. "Any  
town-planning text  
prior to 1935," he says,  
"has references to  
social issues, to  
technical issues, to  
esthetic issues." But  
after the war,  
specialists and bean  
counters took over. It  
was as if America had  
suffered a stroke. "We  
lost language; we lost  
the ability to think  
complexly." As a result,  
"the suburbs we have  
are cartoons of urban  
planning."

is to "run against the market, instead of with it." Banks are reluctant to lend to such "infill" projects because they have no assurance the houses will sell. A prime engine of Phoenix's growth apparently consists of middle-aged couples fleeing California. This is a market, Gleason notes, heavily driven by "security," the polite term for "fear." "Fear of crime is a great motivator for development," says Joe Verdoorn, a Phoenix planner. "Everybody wants to be on the far side of the freeway."

So the new subdivisions go up behind ochre-colored stucco walls

**L** EFT BEHIND IN THIS RUSH TO embrace nature are thousands of 1960s-era ranch houses that are too old, small and unfashionable to attract middle-class buyers, and as a result are turning into that new American phenomenon, the suburban slum. This may be the fate of an area called Maryvale, which like all west-side suburbs suffers from the competitive disadvantage that commuters must drive into the sun both ways. Interspersed among the houses are large tracts of vacant land, dreary commercial strips and a mall, once the cynosure of a thriving neighborhood, now dark and empty. "For the same money that Del Webb is spending in New River, I'll bet they could buy up most of this area and rebuild it," Goddard says. "What is the imperative that says we have to go to a beautiful rural area when we have all this land a few miles from downtown? We're destroying ourselves in shorter and shorter cycles."

The imperative, as Goddard well knows, is "the market." To build in an existing neighborhood, says Jack Gleason, a senior vice president at Del Webb,



*In California, old farms are sprouting more houses than crops*

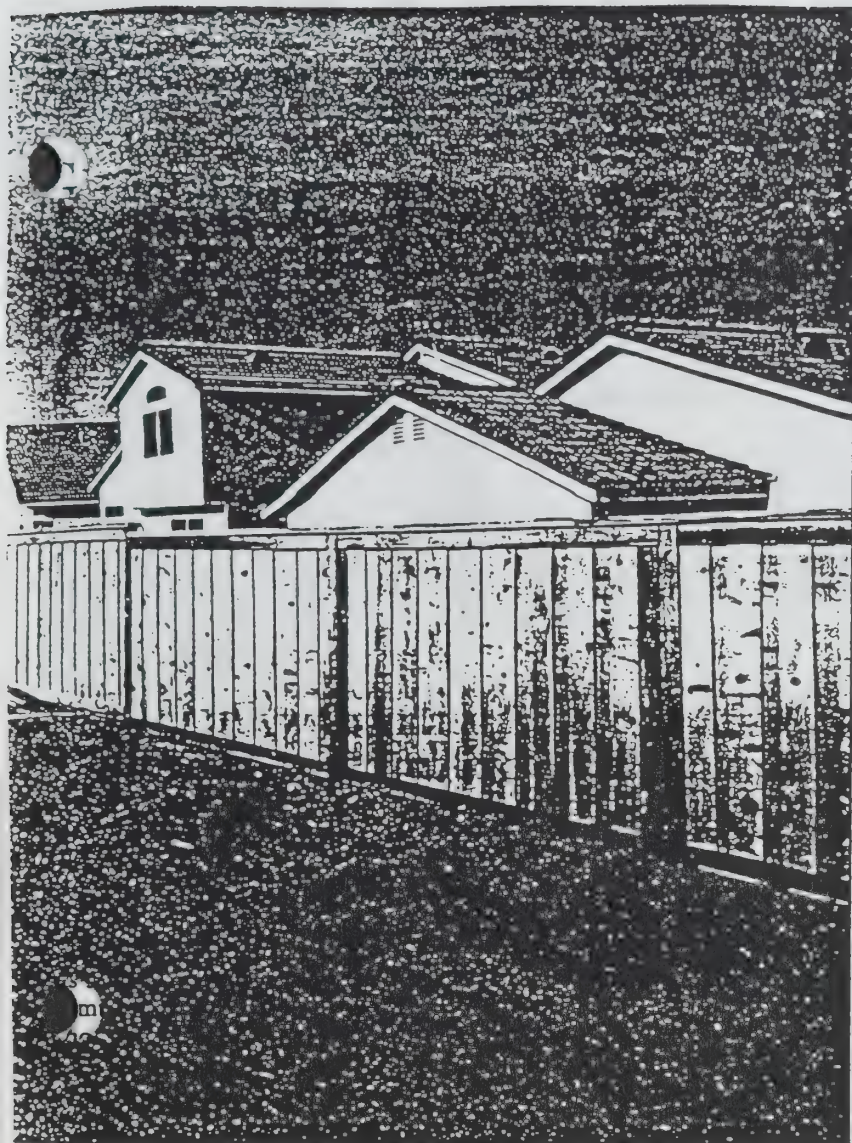
## DON'T FENCE ME IN

To run with the market is to develop virgin land farther out, not to rebuild dying communities closer to the city

six feet high, with guards and gates between the public roads and the inner sanctum of residential streets. Other kinds of barriers defend something nearly as dear to suburbanites as their own skins, property values. Homeowners are isolated by design from apartments, shops, public squares or anything else that might attract people with less money or of a different race. Deed restrictions and community associations see to it that no one will ever bring down the tone of the neighborhood by turning his living room into a beauty parlor. Success for a development lies in freezing for eternity the social and economic class of the original purchasers.

No wonder they're so sterile—sterility is designed into them. Anything else is a threat to the steady appreciation of resale value homeowners take as a basic economic right. You drive down the wide, curving streets of Terraviva, in north Scottsdale, whose sales slogan is "The Harmony of Land and Life" and the signs of "Life" are the saguaro cactuses, which accrue at the rate of about an inch a year. The houses themselves are magnificent monuments to family life: thoughtfully designed, carefully constructed with master bath suites the size of the Oval Office, but the face that turns to the street is the blank brown plane of a three-car garage





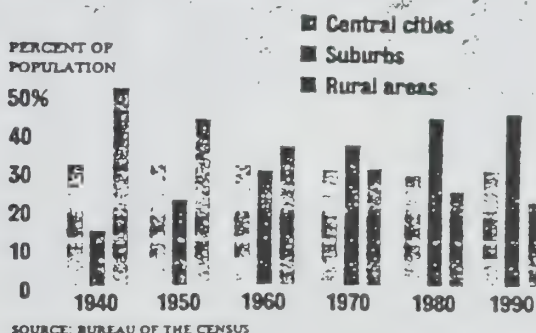
JOHN HUMBLE

**T**O EVEN THINK OF CHANGING THIS CULTURE IS AN ENORMOUS task. It runs counter to the dominant ideology of free-market economics, which in its reductive fashion holds that developers by definition are building what people want to buy. "There is this strange conceit among architects," says Peter Gordon, a professor of economics at the University of Southern California, "that people ought to live in what they design. If you look at how people really want to live in this country, suburbanization is not the problem, it is the solution." And for that matter, Oscar Newman, a celebrated New York-based urban planner, describes the new urbanism as "a retrogressive sentimentality." American families typically live in a neighborhood for three to five years, forming communities based not on common birthplace but on interest: young singles, families with children, "active adults." Who among us, Newman asks, really wants to re-create the social ambience of an 18th-century village? He thinks the suburbs need *more* exclusivity, gates and barriers where none exist already, recognizing that most of us are going to live among strangers for most of our lives.

On the other hand, people can buy only what's for sale. The housing market is notoriously conservative and conformist, if for no other reason than that most people expect to sell their houses someday. Perhaps more people would choose to live in urban villages if they were exposed to them. "If you ask people if they want density," they will always say no," says Peter Katz, author of "The New Urbanism." "But if you ask if they want restaurants and schools and other things close to where they live, they say yes." But you couldn't build a village in most places in the country even if you wanted to. Suburban sprawl is built into the zoning codes of most communities and the lending policies of virtually every bank.

## Population Distribution

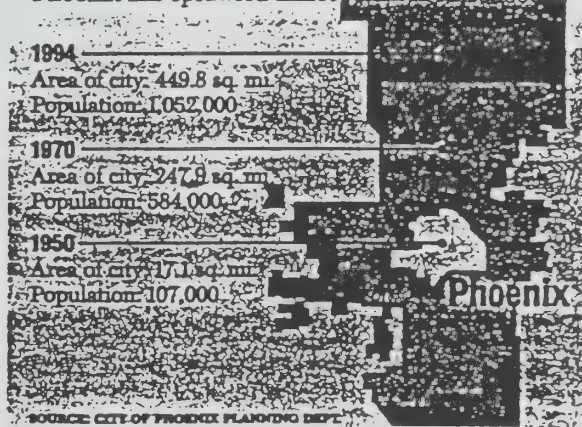
Since 1970, there have been more people in U. S. suburbs than in central cities or rural areas.



SOURCE: BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

## The Expanding Metropolis

Phoenix has sprawled almost tenfold since 1950.



SOURCE: CITY OF PHOENIX PLANNING DEPT.

For new villages to become a reality, they will have to get past a phalanx of planning boards and bank officers, whose first principle is, "Nobody ever lost his job for following the code."

We are, nevertheless, on the verge of a great opportunity. Americans moved to the suburbs for the best of motives—to give their children better schools, cleaner air, a place to ride their bicycles without getting their tires caught in the trolley tracks. Suburbs should teem with life, with humanity in all its diversity (or as much diversity as you can find within one standard deviation of the median family income)—with people walking, running, biking, rocking. But their design has promoted instead the ideals of privacy and exclusivity: the clapboard-sided ranch house, evocative of empty plains; the brick colonial, hinting at descent from the Virginia aristocracy. We can continue the trend of the last 40 years, which Gopal Ahluwalia, director of research for the National Association of Homebuilders, complacently describes as bigger houses, with more amenities, situated farther from the workplace. Or we can go down a different path, which probably will begin with the kind of humble observation a visitor made at a subdivision near Phoenix recently. Like most new developments, this one aimed to conserve water for important uses—namely the golf course—by landscaping the houses with gravel and cactus rather than lawns. As the visitor paced the lot with a puzzled look, it suddenly dawned on him that the desire for an acre of land is not an unvarying constituent of human nature. "Gee," he remarked wonderingly to a saleswoman, "if it's all gravel, you don't really need that much of it, do you?"

With MAGGIE MALONE and PATRICK ROGERS in New York. NINA ARCHER BIDDLE in Memphis. SPENCER REISS in Miami. JEANNE GORDON in Los Angeles. PAUL KANDELL in San Francisco and DANIEL GLICK in Washington.



# 15 Ways to Fix the Suburbs

Most of us actually know what we want in a neighborhood—we just don't know how to get it, because developers have been building the wrong thing for 50 years. Here's how to get our communities back on track.



JOHN HUMER

*Moving day at Kentlands, the neotraditional suburb in Maryland where houses are close to the street and to each other*

**F**OR DECADES, ANTON NELESSON OF RUTGERS University has been using the tools of science to pursue that most elusive and subjective quality, happiness. When a developer comes into a community, humbly seeking permission to re-create ancient Pompeii on the site of an old Go Kart track, the town's planners commission Neleson to survey the populace and determine if that's what they'd actually like there. Using photographs, models and questionnaires, Neleson has surveyed people all over the country, and these are some of the things he's found:

■ "Everybody will call for a green open space in the middle—that's automatic. They will put the major community buildings around the plaza, then group the houses on relatively narrow streets. Ninety-nine percent don't want streets that are more than

two lanes wide. At the edges of the village they leave open space

■ "With two working spouses, [smaller lots] make a lot more sense. You don't want to mow that big lawn."

■ "People have a fundamental, psychological, spiritual response to nature. If you show them recently built multi-family housing or office parks, they go negative. A small, traditional neighborhood is what people want. They don't know how to get it."

Well, of course they don't: most of them haven't even seen a "small, traditional neighborhood" in years, if ever. But they instinctively choose it anyway. The premise of the new urbanism is that people can have the kinds of neighborhoods they say they like. Architects know how to design them, developers can build them, banks can make money on them. All it takes is a measure of political will to overcome the inertia of 50 years of doing things the wrong way . . . and the application of a few simple rules.



## GIVE UP BIG LAWNS

**1** ONE USEFUL WAY TO DEFINE A SUBURB is "a place that grows lawns." The great postwar disillusionment began for many Americans when they left the city in search of a simpler life and discovered that watering, fertilizing, weeding and mowing the measliest yard takes more time over a year than the average New Yorker spends looking for parking. And the expanses of front lawn themselves serve no purpose but their owners' vanity—except that most suburban communities require them, on the theory that large setbacks help preserve the bucolic character of a community.

That may have been true in the 1920s, when suburbs were being settled 30 houses at a time. But when highways opened up huge areas of countryside after the war, large-lot zoning had the opposite effect: by spreading population over a larger area, it accelerated sprawl. If zoning boards weren't so fearful of "density," they could require developers to cluster houses and set aside land nearby for open space and recreation. This is also a more efficient way to build a community. Houses that are 100 feet apart, continuously, have 100 feet of unused road and utility lines between them. School buses have that much farther to travel.

And the goal of making a walkable community is defeated when houses are spread out on huge lots. Even the depth of the front yard turns out to make a crucial psychological difference. When houses are set back behind 30 feet of lawn, the streetscape becomes oppressively desolate; your perspective changes so slowly you don't feel you're reaching a destination. Probably no single change would improve the quality of suburban life as much as shrinking the size of lots—and it would actually make houses cheaper.

## BRING BACK THE CORNER STORE

**2** THE SUBURBAN CONDITION, SAYS architect Peter Calthorpe, "is a landscape of absolute segregation . . . not just in terms of income, age or ethnicity, but simple functional uses." This is so obvious that most people no longer see the absurdity of making a five-mile round trip for a loaf of bread. That is, as long as they have a car; for anyone not so abled—children, the elderly or handicapped, people who can't afford a car for every member of the family—it's nuts.

Again, this is a function of good intentions undone by the explosion of suburbia. What worked in a compact neighborhood in a city—a dry cleaner, a drugstore, a corner grocery—became grotesque when blown up a hundredfold and applied to whole counties. Shopping strips stretched for dozens of miles along the



JOHN HUMBLE

*This wide street in Temecula, Calif., is fine for cars but not for kids and other pedestrians*

## MAKE THE STREETS SKINNY

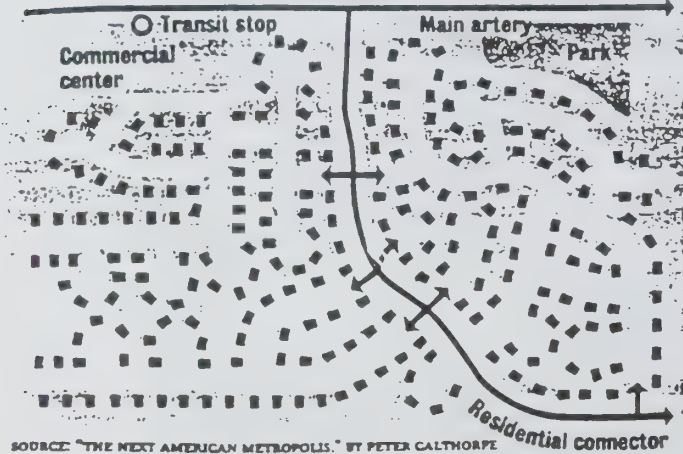
**3** Modern subdivisions are designed to be driven, not walked. Even little-used streets are 36 feet or 40 feet wide, with big sweeping curves at the corners. It's great for cars: traffic barely needs to slow down. But for those on foot, the distance is daunting. Narrow streets—as little as 26 feet wide—and tight, right-angled corners are a lot easier for walkers, and probably safer as well, because they force drivers to slow down. One objection: fire departments worry about getting trucks through. But that hasn't been a big problem in old nabes in cities like New York and Boston.

highways, while the curving streets of suburbia wormed their way ever deeper into the countryside.

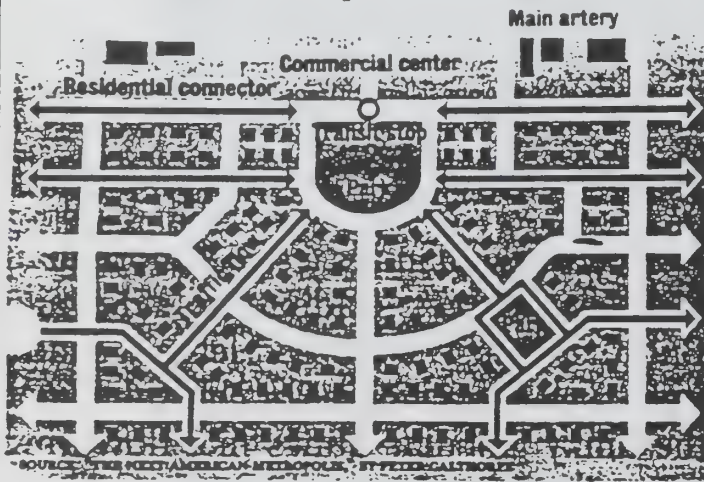
Obviously, malls and supermarkets, with their vast selections and economies of scale, will never be supplanted by neighborhood shopping streets and corner groceries. But it still should be possible to provide some of the necessities of life within walking distance of many people. Then you could send your kid out for that bread—and a newspaper while he's at it.



### Discouraged: Winding streets and cul-de-sacs exacerbate traffic.



### Preferred: Streets converge on transit and commercial center.



## DROP THE CUL-DE-SAC

**4** The cul-de-sac, a fancy term for "dead end," has emerged as the street plan of choice for modern suburbs. Its great advantage—the elimination of through traffic—is also its weakness, because it compels everyone in a given subdivision to use the same few roads, often at the same times. Anyone attempting to travel on foot or by bicycle will eventually wind up on the shoulder of a busy highway—and probably give up. But streets don't have to be like that: they can follow predictable routes and interconnect. This gives motorists a choice of routes, so they don't all pile up every morning waiting to make a left turn at the same intersection.

## DRAW BOUNDARIES

**5** IN AN ABSOLUTE SENSE, THERE IS NO REAL SHORTAGE OF land in the United States; if the entire population lived on an acre of land per household, it would occupy less than 5 percent of the contiguous 48 states (plus all of Canada and Mexico for parking). But in the regions where Americans actually want to live, they are swarming into the countryside, covering whole counties with "edge cities" flung outward from the beltways as if by centrifugal force. New York City's suburbs reach across the whole state of New Jersey into eastern Pennsylvania, nearly 100 miles from Times Square. To new-urbanist theoreticians, this is the disastrous result of shortsighted government policies, such as the bias in the federal mortgage-guarantee program toward detached houses on large plots of land. To free-market economists, it represents the sum of millions of choices by informed individuals who have decided that, on balance, getting up before dawn in Bucks County beats a full night's sleep in Brooklyn.

But sprawl is not a necessary component of affluence. In Europe and Japan, governments have proclaimed "urban-growth boundaries," beyond which development is more or less prohibited. Even in a democratic country such as Holland, a businessman seeking to live on a farm and drive into the city to work would have to request permission from the government—and he might not get it. Try telling that to Lee Iacocca. Contrary to popular American political theory, these regulations haven't noticeably affected the prosperity of Western Europe—nor of the one major American city that has instituted its own urban-growth boundary: Portland, Ore.

In Oregon, naturally, no one would prevent the hypothetical businessman from living on a farm; he just couldn't sell it off for a subdivision when he retired to Palm Springs. More than 20 years ago, planners for the Portland metropolitan area drew a line around 325 square miles—covering 24 municipalities and parts of three counties—and designated it to receive virtually all population growth. Along the way they have reduced the average lot size for detached houses from 13,000 square feet to an average of 8,500 square feet—roughly the difference between putting three and five units on an acre. The proposed future goal is an even mungier 6,600 square feet. Between now and the year 2040, Portland's planners expect the population to grow some 77 percent, but they are committed to an increase of residential land use of only 6 percent. Instead of planting more "edge cities" at the arbitrary points where freeways intersect, Portland has concentrated job growth in its downtown. The urban-growth boundary has been so successful that even a conservative property-rights group, Oregonians in Action, endorses the concept (although it argues with some details). Imagine how Los Angeles would look today if it had done this 20 years ago.



JAMES D. WILSON—NEW YORK TIMES  
Leading new urbanist

Nothing irks Peter Calthorpe more than "naysayers who say that Americans don't want to live in high-density cities—they want suburbs, as though there were only two choices." According to the San Francisco architect, "The answer is to understand there are a huge number of people with different lifestyles. There are different densities in new urbanism, some low, some high. Neighborhoods that have diversity—cafés, recreation, casual social encounters—will be increasingly important. Suburbs aren't just about bedrooms anymore."



## L I F E S T Y L E

### HIDE THE GARAGE

**6** Most suburban houses give the appearance that they are first of all places to park, turning to the world the blank and desolate face of a garage door. Neighborhoods look more pleasant when garages are put behind the houses, accessible by side yards or by alleys.



Multicar garages turn an unwelcoming face to the street

### MIX HOUSING TYPES

**7** OF ALL THE WAYS TO IMPROVE THE SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL organization of the suburbs, none would be as subversive as breaking the monopoly of single-family detached homes: that endless alternation of "Crestwoods" and "Auroras" intended to foster the illusion of preference in buyers' choosing between four bedrooms and three bedrooms plus a den. Homogeneity is the very essence of the suburbs. Attached houses, rental units, shops or businesses—anything that might attract traffic and its attendant evil, a decline in property values—are banned.

This is a fairly new phenomenon in human history. For most of the last 9,000 years, most people inhabited villages, where by definition nothing was very far from anything else. As late as the 1940s, for that matter, Memphis, Tenn., developer Henry Turley grew up in the kind of haphazard city neighborhood that is the despair of sensible planners: a jumble of stores, shacks, flats, walk-ups and decaying mansions, all suffused with the vivid street life neighbors made for themselves in the era before air conditioning lured them indoors. It is, of course, beyond the power of zoning to bring back those days, even if we wanted them back, but it may be possible to recapture some of the energy and spirit that characterized American civic life before television clamped its monopoly on public discourse and entertainment. So in 1987, when Turley bought a 135-acre vacant plot on an island in the Mississippi five minutes from downtown Memphis, he embarked on a radically different kind of development, which began not by asking "What

will the county let me build?" or "What will the banks finance?" but "What kind of place do people want to live in?"

The result was Harbor Town, intended to be "a slice of the world—the more complete and varied the better." There are houses ranging in price from \$114,000 to \$425,000, which contrast with a typical subdivision in Phoenix, Ariz., for example, where the seven basic models run the gamut from \$271,990 to \$316,990. There are town houses and apartments, and shops being planned. Developers had tried mixing housing types in the "planned communities" of the 1970s, but in those each use was isolated in its own thousand-acre quadrant; in Harbor Town they are all within a few blocks of each other. Turley seems to have decreed that instead of golf, the leading recreational activity would be chatting with neighbors while watching the sun set over the river, so he set the houses close together and built cozy village squares. The houses themselves are an eye-popping collection of styles, including Charlestown provincial, Cape Cod and Bauhaus modern, but they have an underlying unity based on materials (mostly clapboard or wood siding) and the ubiquitous new-urbanist amenity, porches. Turley expects to make money on the project, when it's completed in 1997, but he also has a higher aim: "Democracy assumes—demands—that we know, understand and respect our fellow citizens," he says. "How can we appreciate them if we never see them?"

### PLANT TREES CURBSIDE

**8** Nothing humanizes a street more than a row of trees shading the sidewalk. But they must be broad-leaved shade trees such as sycamores or chestnuts, not the dinky globular things like flowering pears that developers favor in parking lots. And they should be planted out at the curblane, where they will grow out to form a canopy over the roadway. Why don't more places have such an obvious amenity already? Because traffic engineers worry that people might drive into them.



Strolling under a canopy of spring blossoms

DIANE COOK/LEN IENSHIEL



## PUT NEW LIFE INTO OLD MALLS

**9** THEY'VE GOT FOUNTAINS, HANGING ferns and ice rinks, and if you stay in one long enough you may eventually hear "Wichita Lineman" rescored for 140 violins, but most shopping malls are, essentially, just vast sheds that consumers trudge through until, with nothing left to spend, they are spit out into the parking lot. No wonder people are so quick to desert them when a bigger one opens up down the road. Ghost malls are no longer a rare sight in America. Phoenix has at least two, including one right across the street from several of its largest office buildings. But the land they occupy can, with some ingenuity and a lot of money, become the nucleus of a real neighborhood, an architectural adornment rather than a hulking blight.

The process is happening first with strip shopping centers, which are usually older than enclosed malls and less complex architecturally. The first step is to transcend the definition of a "shopping center" as a grouping of unrelated stores in the middle of a parking lot. That pretty much described the

Seabury Shopping Center, a dreary 1960s-era strip mall on a busy highway in Cape Cod, Mass., about 70 miles from Boston. A decade ago, the owners decided to redevelop it on a radically different scheme, modeled on a New England town. New streets were laid out in what had been the parking lot; new shops were built in the neglected area behind the existing ones. A 25-year development plan was drawn up, envisioning a substantial community: offices, a library, a church and a senior-citizens' home have already been built.

Parking was redistributed along the curbs of the new internal streets. This makes for some congestion and inefficiency, but lessens the frustration of trudging down long aisles of parked cars toward a distant mall entrance. Developer Douglas Storrs says that shoppers find the strength to walk as much as half a mile down the sidewalks of what is now called Mashpee Commons, passing shop windows, benches and planters. The same people reach the threshold of exasperation when they have to park more than 400 feet from the door to an ordinary mall.

There are other examples, including Mizner Park, in Boca Raton, Fla., where a failing shopping center was replaced with a 20-acre mixed-use development organized around a new public park. To be sure, not all developers will be this ambitious with their properties. But as a first step, hiding the ugly collection of dumpsters and loading docks on the backsides of strip malls could eliminate a lot of suburban blight.



DIANE COOK/LEN JEN'S HEL

*In Portland, Ore., these commuters are choosing to ride the rails*

## PLAN FOR MASS TRANSIT

**10** Is there any way to get Americans out of their cars and into buses and trains? In Los Angeles, not even an earthquake sufficed; only about 2 percent of drivers switched to mass transit after their freeways fell down last year, and most of them went right back to driving as soon as the roads were patched up.

The problem is that transit seems to need a critical mass to work, and many metropolitan areas (Los Angeles among them) are just too spread out. Many commuters seem to think that if you have to drive to the train station anyway, you might as well just keep going to the office.

Hence Calthorpe's idea for the "pedestrian pocket": a relatively dense settlement within a quarter-mile walk of a transit stop. In Portland, Ore., they're building the transit line *first*—putting stops literally in the middle of empty fields—in the expectation that the development will follow.



## L I F E S T Y L E

## LINK WORK TO HOME

**11** SUBURBS ARE NO LONGER JUST BEDROOM communities; the dispersal of employment out of the central cities has been going on for a generation. (As the writer William H. Whyte demonstrated two decades ago, big corporations leaving the city tend to relocate within a few miles of the chief executive's house.) But the result—the oxymoronic “office parks” consisting of indistinguishable glass cubes amid a token fuzz of grass and a giant parking lot—is just a higher class of sprawl than the gas stations and fried-chicken places that would have been built there instead.

If companies don't want to be downtown, they should at least attempt to integrate their offices—or factories, for that matter—into communities. Nobody wants to live next to a steel mill, naturally. But in Laguna West, outside Sacramento, people are happy to live within a quarter-mile of an Apple Computer plant, which provides 1,200 white-collar and assembly-line jobs. Apple agreed to locate there after the community was already planned; developer Phil Angelides says the company liked the idea that executives and workers could afford to live in the same community. Playa Vista, a new-urbanist community being planned for Los Angeles, has been mentioned as a possible home for the DreamWorks SKG multimedia company. It could be an updated—and very upscale—version of the company town, which in this case will comprise 13,000 houses and apartments, shops, a park, promenades and jogging trails along the last tidal marsh in the city.

Calthorpe believes that more businesses will move to new-urbanist projects as they grow disillusioned with the traffic and isolation of their office parks. “The idea is not necessarily to live in



FREDERICK CHARLES

*A different approach*

Mixing income levels in a neighborhood is a new-urbanist credo, and nobody does that better than planner Oscar Newman.

His scattered-site low-income housing for Yonkers, N.Y., is a model of its kind. But Newman is no fan of the new urbanists. Instead of saying, “This is what’s wrong [with suburbs],” they should ask, “Why do people feel it’s worth it to live there?”

the same development you work in,” he says. “there are a lot of criteria for where you choose your house. But if people can walk to a park, to midday shopping, restaurants and day care, it’s better for the people working there.”

## SHRINK PARKING LOTS

**13** PARKING IS ONE OF SUBURBIA'S HIGHEST achievements. Only in the United States does the humblest copy-shop or pizzeria boast as much space for cars as the average city hall. But it is also a curse; the vast acreage given over to asphalt is useless for any other purpose, and goes unused more than half the time anyway. Most planners regard parking as a prerequisite for economic growth, like water. But downtown Portland, Ore., which strictly regulates parking, has been thriving with essentially the same space for cars as it had 20 years ago. Developers often build more parking than they actually need; a half-empty lot is presumed to reassure prospective tenants that they'll never run out of space for their cars. Yet a bank, a movie theater and a church are all full at different times. One simple improvement towns can make is to look for ways to share and pool parking space among different users.

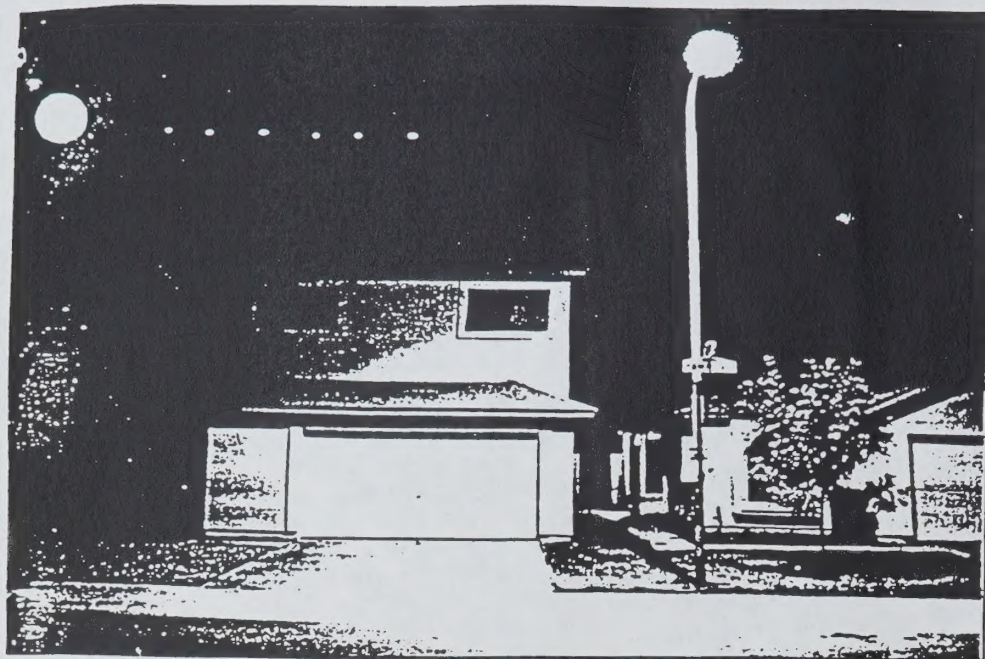
The ideal—although expensive—solution to the parking problem is for cars to vanish underground when they get where they're going. A shopping center surrounded by acres of striped asphalt, whether it's empty or full, might as well put up a moat against pedestrians. Large parking lots should be situated behind buildings whenever possible—something most suburban zoning codes don't currently allow—and divided by streets, sidewalks or structures into smaller segments of around three acres or less. On-street parking in residential neighborhoods is controversial. Some planners favor it, because it creates a “buffer” between pedestrians and traffic, but others consider it a danger to children running out between the cars.

## MAKE A TOWN CENTER

**12** Every town needs a center: a plaza, square or green that is a geographical reference point and a focus of civic life—even if that just means a place to push a stroller or throw a Frisbee. Shopping malls are a poor substitute; the area they serve is too diffuse, and in any case their civic function is incidental to their real purpose—making money. Developers often provide some parkland in their subdivisions, but it's usually on leftover parcels that wouldn't be built on anyway, by the edge of the highway or adjoining another subdivision.







A garish street lamp in Maryvale, a neighborhood in Phoenix

JOHN HUMBLE

## TURN DOWN THE LIGHTS

**14** It is probably true that illuminating a suburban street to the level of the infield at Comiskey Park reduces accidents, especially for people who leave their regular glasses at home and have to drive in sunglasses. For everyone else, though, towering, garish sodium-vapor street lamps intrude on the peacefulness of the night with the insistence of a stuck horn. Where safety is not a big issue, why not use several smaller lamps that cast a gentler glow and let you see the stars?

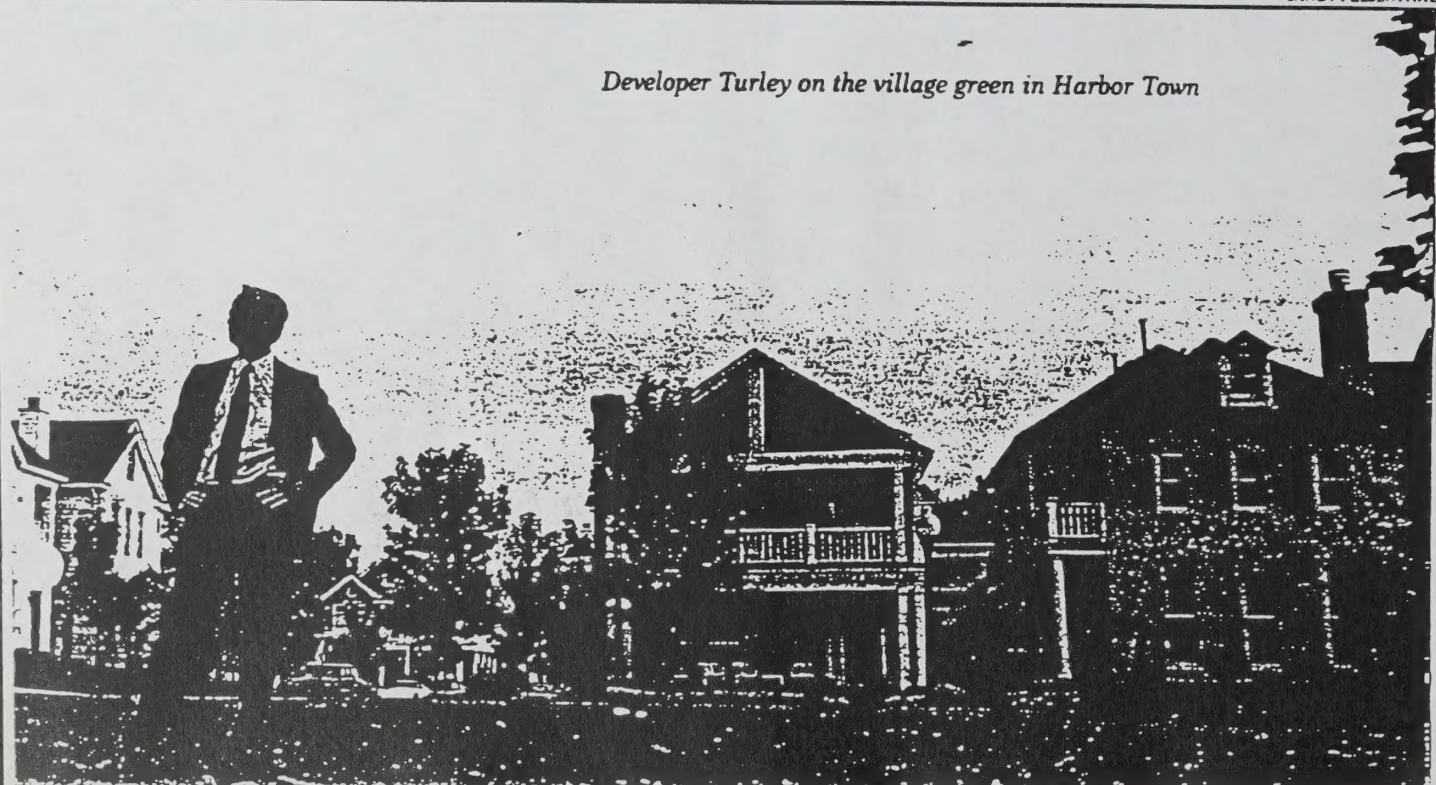
## THINK GREEN

**15** OUT BEYOND THE BELTWAY, where the roads are narrow and blacktop, past the point at which the dwindling traffic is too sparse to warrant plucking by even the stingiest motor court, there's a beautiful land. There are pale green corn plants poking through the brown soil, lakes glimpsed through trees, cholla cactus among the tumbled red rocks. It's not wilderness, but countryside, the unfinished canvas of America. It tells us where we are—in Illinois, Maine or Texas—and it locates us in time: summer, fall, winter, spring. There's nothing to buy there, nowhere to park; it doesn't lure us with golden arches or free coffee mugs with a fill-up. It's just there.

And by the same token, it isn't making anyone rich, yet. There is a gradient of value that runs from the city to the country, and it keeps moving outward; pick any spot and it's just a matter of time before it makes the magical transition from "countryside" to "real estate." The process seems inevitable, but it isn't, really. It's the product of concrete decisions made in an age when roads were still viewed as the harbingers of civilization rather than discount muffler outlets. And as surely as our society made those decisions, it can change them, before lawn meets lawn and asphalt meets asphalt, covering the land in a seamless carpet of sprawl.

SANDY FELSENTHAL

Developer Turley on the village green in Harbor Town







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